

# THE WRITER IN HOLLYWOOD

ROBERT TOWNE  ALJEAN HARMETZ  
'THE WARREN BEATTY PROJECT'

JOHN GREGORY DUNNE  
F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

# Esquire

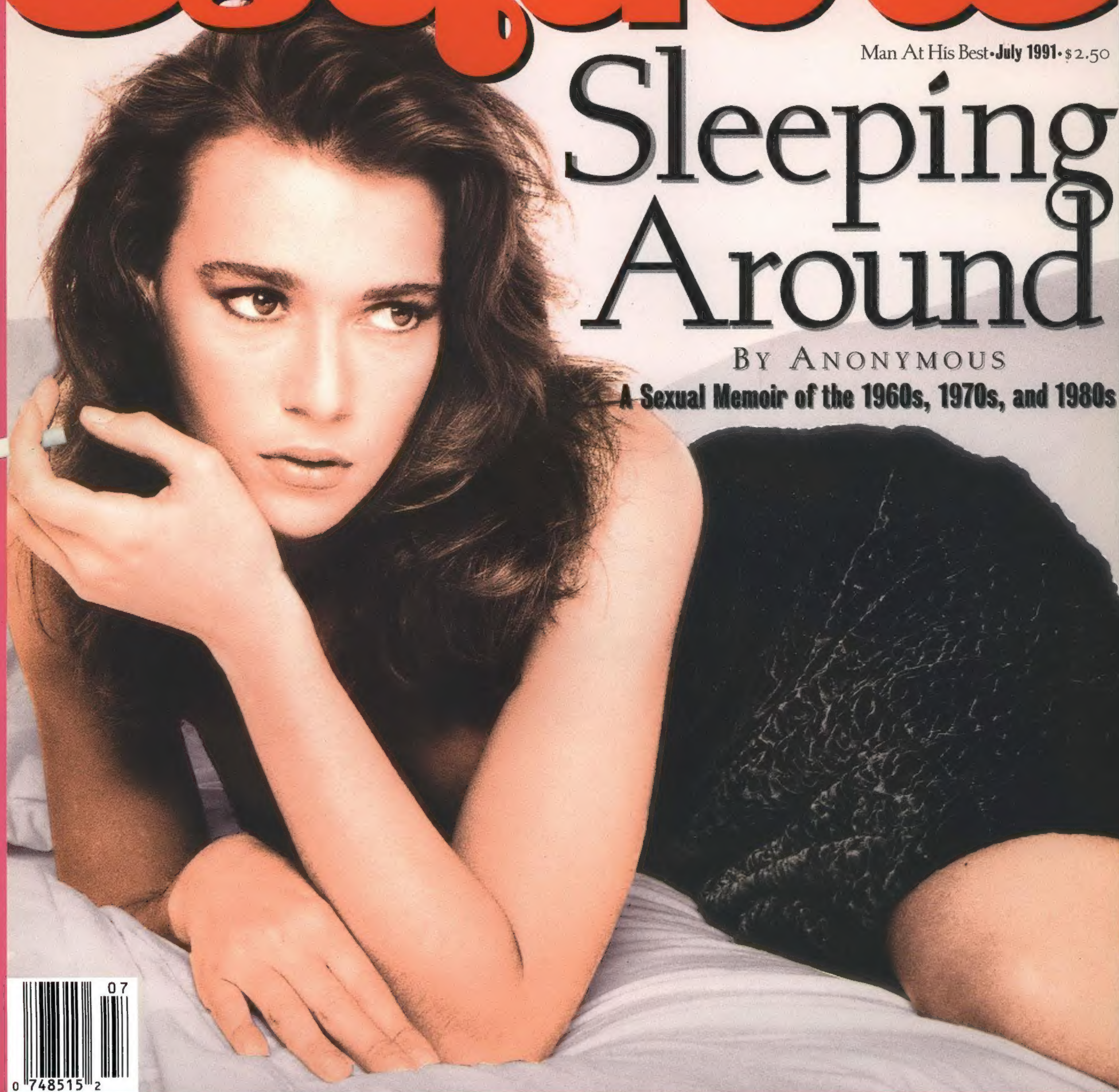
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# Esquire

JULY 1991 VOLUME 116 No. 1

## FEATURES

### 58 The Haunting of the New South

The murder of civil-rights leader Medgar Evers has gone unsolved for nearly thirty years, but the day of judgment for the killer may have come at last. *By Maryanne Vollers*

### 64 Sleeping Around

It begins and ends with Gray's *Anatomy*. In between, there's sex in the pool of Plato's Retreat, the curious plight of models who can't get laid, and the emergence of the terrifying specter of AIDS. A memoir of one man's sexual adventures over three decades. *By Anonymous*

## THE WRITER IN HOLLYWOOD

### 79 Glory and Humiliation in the Screen Trade

If you're hot, a screenplay's worth more than a million dollars, but you also pay a price. Plus: The Hollywood 107, a list of who's who in screenwriting. *By Aljean Harmetz*

### 86 Why I Write Movies

Art has something to do with it, and so does the city of Los Angeles. *By Robert Towne*

### 88 Truth, Illusion, and Very Good Insurance

"First of all, I'd like to thank the Academy..." et cetera. *By John Gregory Dunne*



Whose bed is it anyway? Page 64

## SPECIAL HOLLYWOOD FICTION

**94 A Writer's Assignment** Bud Wiggins is a screenwriter who drives a limousine—and a hard bargain with producers. So how come he's always getting taken for a ride? *By Bruce Wagner*

**100 The Warren Beatty Project** An unknown is tapped to direct the star's next picture. Anjelica's thrilled. Jodie has some reservations. It all sounds too good to be true. *By David Krane*

**106 A Man in the Way** Pat Hobby learns the only ism in films is plagiarism. *By F. Scott Fitzgerald*

### 110 At Play in the Fields of Hollywood

Everyone from Bob Rafelson to Swifty Lazar wanted to bring Peter Matthiessen's novel to the screen. Twenty-five years and a rain forest later, it has finally been shot. *By Chip Brown*

## FASHION

### 70 Learn Your Lines

The four *Mobsters*—Christian Slater, Patrick Dempsey, Richard Grieco, and Costas Mandylor—in the deadliest looks for fall. *Photographs by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders*

### 76 Light in July

A selection of summer shoes. Your feet will thank you. *Photographs by Gerhard Jurkovic*



Author, auteur: Orson Welles writes poolside in Hollywood, 1945

THE POLO CHINO  
RALPH LAUREN



# Departments



Costas Mandylor: What's my line? Page 70

## Letters

10 The Sound and the Fury

## Contributors

13 Backstage with Esquire

## Art and Politics

**19 KEEPING SCORE WITH MONEY**  
You can never be too rich or too smug.  
By Terry McDonell

**20 TYPOLOGIES: THE NEW SOUP CANS**  
Picture this, again and again.  
By Michael Hirschorn

**22 BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

**22 50 WAYS TO MAKE A BUCK OFF THE ENVIRONMENT**  
Green is good.  
By Mary Roach

**23 OFF THE CHARTS**  
By Kurt Loder

**23 THE JULY CURVE**

## Man At His Best

**49 Classics THE HANGOVER**  
Raise a glass to the morning after.  
By John Berendt

**50 Motoring CAN YOU DISPLAY THE WAY TO SAN JOSE?**  
Travelpilot takes its place on the map.  
By Phil Patton

**54 Sport MY LIFE AS A TREND**  
I Rollerblade, therefore I am... just like everybody else.  
By Fred Graver

**56 Dangerous Knowledge**  
HOW TO CORK A BAT  
And other tips for swingers.  
By Jay Stowe

**57 Living Quarters**  
WAY COOL BREEZE  
A futuristic fan's notes.  
By Phil Patton

## Columns

**26 American Journal**  
A CONFEDERACY OF COMPLAINERS  
The circumstances of victims.  
By Pete Hamill

**35 The Sporting Life**  
AND THE WIENER IS...  
The most annoying people in sports.  
By Mike Lupica

**40 Hanging Out**  
WAITING FOR GANNON  
Late Night without David Letterman's producer. By George Plimpton

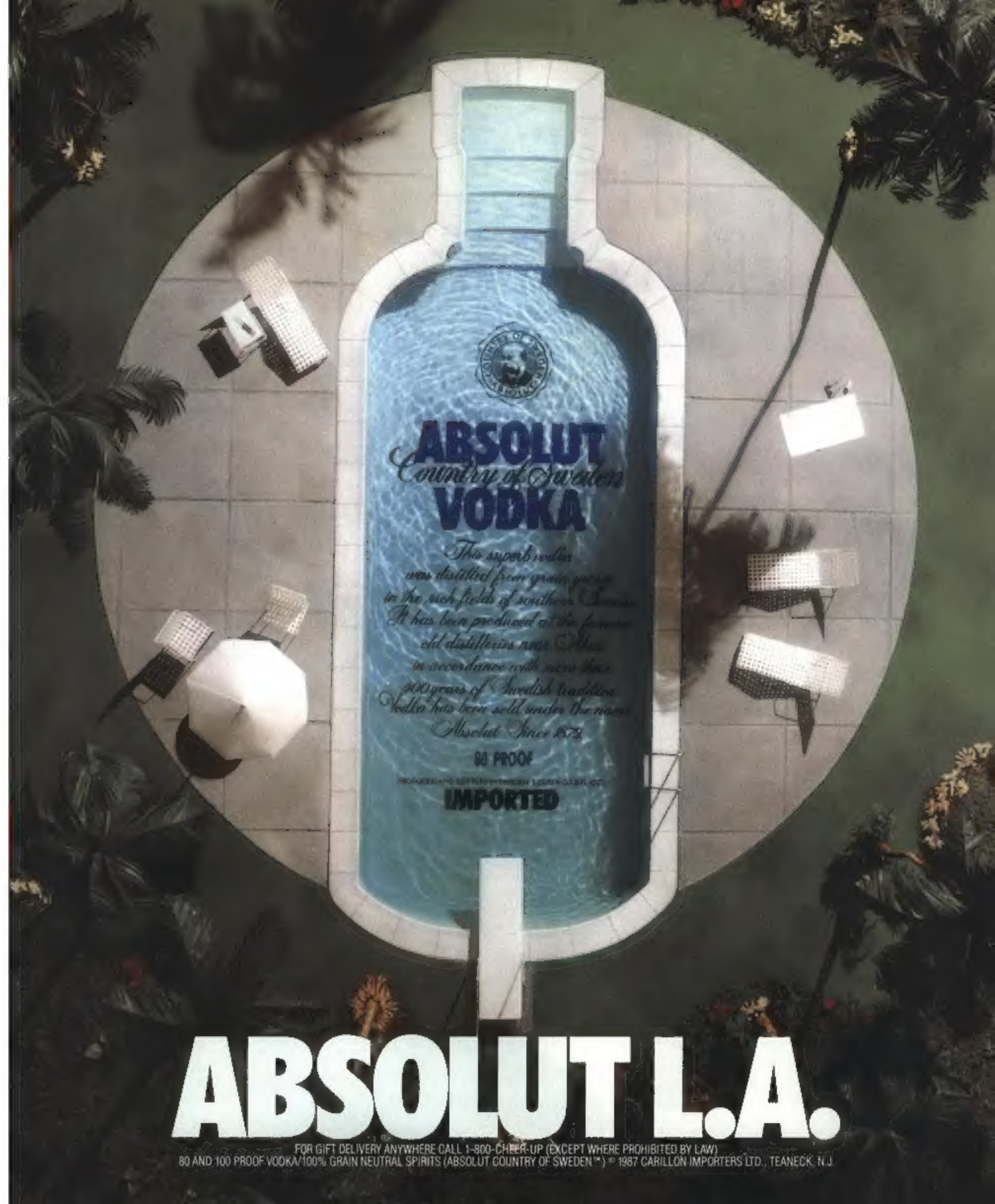
**44 Executive Summary**  
LET'S GET EMPTY  
Personal history makes for heavy baggage.  
By Stanley Bing

## The Esquire BusinessTraveler

**124 Eat and Run**  
WHAT'S COOL IN NEW YORK  
THIS SUMMER  
The dish on the Big Apple.  
By John Mariani



Tom Berenger at play in the jungle. Page 110



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# The Sound and the Fury

## Weiss Cracks

THE COVER OF YOUR April issue gave me a great idea: How about running a story on Ellen Barkin? Philip Weiss's exposé ("Ellen Barkin Goes Mano a Mano") of his own interviewing technique was fascinating, but Barkin is, after all, a celebrity, and I'll bet a lot of your readers would love to hear what she has to say.

Matt Ruff  
Portland, Maine



ELLEN BARKIN'S FACE (and legs!) were on the cover, her name was in the headline, so who's Phil? And why should anyone care? "Phil feels," "Phil shrugs," "Phil decides," but mostly, it seems, "Phil's pleased"—with seeing his own name.

Greg Joyce  
Winter Park, Fla.

KUDOS TO ELLEN BARKIN for not succumbing to Philip Weiss's "drop trou" line of questioning!

Gregory Uryasz  
Omaha, Nebr.

PHIL WEISS'S "INTERVIEW" with Ellen Barkin was terrific. They both came out with their dignity intact. And so did I. Instead of the guilty feeling that I had been dragged through another La-la Land, mushy celebrity profile, I finished feeling stimulated and better acquainted with Ellen Barkin. And with Phil too.

Dee Ann Darney  
San Francisco, Calif.

## Mano War

DENIS JOHNSON MAY BE trying to forget the war, but I will long remember his remarkable reportage ("Knockin' on Heaven's Door," April). I will try to forget, however, Philip Weiss's dispatch of his battle with Ellen Barkin. It's odd that Johnson has written so beautifully about a modern horror while Weiss has written so horribly about a modern beauty.

Jim Morris  
Asheboro, N.C.

## Fighting Words

I AM A TWENTY-FOUR-year-old who is not in the service, but a few of my good friends are. The last paragraphs of Denis Johnson's "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" left me with the impression that Johnson was blaming the young people who served in the gulf for their impetuosity; that indeed the very bloodlust of a new generation had superseded logic to give us this con-

flict. Throughout the piece, in fact, Johnson depicts these young soldiers as machines caught in the motion of war, their complete faith in training and equipment repeated like a mantra. But Johnson shouldn't blame the stupidities of this particular conflict on my generation. It was not our policy and we are not machines. I don't think we twentynothings suffer from bloodlust. We are just a small group that suffers none of the benefits of the naive idealism that fueled the Sixties, nor the cynicism and moneylust that motivated the Eighties. We are just pathetic realists who have been left with only a sense of resignation. So when America decided to purge the staggering load of national guilt by telling us the Army was, in fact, an instrument of national policy, we shouldered our responsibilities and went to the gulf, not to Canada.

Kevin Sprague  
Lenox, Mass.

## Our Ms. Brooks

I FOUND GERALDINE Brooks's article "Please Don't Offend the Saudis" (April) artfully written and entertaining. She documents the materialism, lasciviousness, intolerance, and hypocrisy of Saudi officials as brightly as I have read anywhere. But as an American born of Arab parents, I find it disheartening that she was unable to convey any of the more positive aspects of Middle Eastern culture. No-

where in the piece did Brooks explain why there is so little crime in Saudi Arabia that shopkeepers leave their stores unlocked and unattended while they pray at the mosque, or why there are no homeless among the poor, or even why in this modern age so many Saudis continue to sincerely hold deeply spiritual beliefs. It was a shameful display of cultural jingoism.

Hassan Elmasry  
New York, N.Y.

## Axthelm Epitaph

THE "FUNERAL SINK" Hunter S. Thompson speaks of in his obit for Pete Axthelm (Year of the Wolf, April) is not the 1990s—it's the Intensive Care Unit where patients with liver failure spend their last days, cursing unseen phantoms, crying, and writhing in pain because their livers can no longer metabolize pain medication. It's a shame Pete Axthelm couldn't have gone to the track without a drink—he wouldn't have had to go to the tomb so early. And we who loved him on television would still have him around. If Thompson is going to eulogize him, he should pay tribute to his talents, not to his drinking.

Jack Ferranti  
Wexford, Pa.

Letters to the editor should be mailed with your address and daytime phone number to: The Sound and the Fury, Esquire, 1790 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10019. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.



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Hearst International Editions

Published at 1790 Broadway,

New York, NY 10019; (212) 459-7500.

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Esquire, P.O. Box 7146, Red Oak, IA 51591,

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# Backstage with Esquire

OUR COVER STORY this month is about sex. Good, bad, kinky, boring, gay, straight...you get the idea. Perhaps you've even had some. One of the interesting things about the article—and there are many—is its by-line: Anonymous.

The most notorious anonymous article we've ever published (and arguably the most notorious article we've ever published) is "Latins Are Lousy Lovers," which knocked Don Juans everywhere down to size. When it first appeared in October 1936, the editors thought it important to protect the writer's—that is, a woman's—innocence. Today, however, it is no secret that "Latins Are Lousy Lovers" was penned by Helen Lawrenson, who contributed many memorable signed articles over the next forty years.

In "Sleeping Around" (page 64), we have once again honored an author's request and granted anonymity. The article spans three decades of one man's sexual memoirs and is not so much a who-did-what-and-how-well tale as it is a meditation on the sexual mores of our time. He begins in the repressed halls of an English private school, where a first encounter with sex often meant a peek at *Gray's Anatomy*. He then moves to the trenches of the sexual revolution, when a one-night stand (depending on how good the drugs were) could last a week. Then to the orgasmic swimming pool of Plato's Retreat, where bathing suits were not exactly required, although wearing goggles was wise. Ironically, our anonymous amorist ends his saga with an anticlimax—in the



Maryanne Vollers

repressed age of AIDS. In all, "Sleeping Around" tells it like it was and concludes that in today's sad state of affairs, it is better to be a fifty-year-old man with a lifetime of experience behind you than a twenty-one-year-old with a lifetime of uncertainty ahead.

Finally, actress Maruschka Detmers, who appears on our cover, is neither Anonymous (since we've just mentioned her name) nor sleeping around.

When MARYANNE VOLLERS left *Rolling Stone* after five years, she went to Africa in search of adventure. Based in Nairobi, Vollers worked as a field producer for NBC News and as a stringer for *Time*. As for the adventures, Vollers says of an early story on

Liberia, "Most of my sources have since been eaten." That savory detail notwithstanding, Vollers continued to write and produce until 1987, when she moved to Johannesburg, South Africa, with her husband, photographer William Campbell. Now back in the United States, Vollers reports this month on the coming trial of Byron De La Beckwith, the accused murderer of civil-rights leader Medgar Evers ("The Haunting of the New South," page 58). "It's not that great a leap from South Africa to the Old South," says Vollers. "Obviously, I don't know what it's like to be black, but I do know what it's like to live in a police state."

On April 24 Esquire received the 1991 National Magazine Award in Fiction for short stories by SAUL BELLOW ("Something to Remember Me By," July 1990), RACHEL INGALLS ("Faces of Madness," July 1990), and REYNOLDS PRICE ("Serious



Fiction Editor Rust Hills at the National Magazine Awards

Need," November 1990). The magazine was also a finalist in three other categories: Reporting ("Terminal Delinquents," by JACK HITT and PAUL TOUGH, December 1990); Feature Writing ("Europe," by JAMES SALTER, December 1990); and Essays & Criticism ("The Case Against Sensitivity," by DAVID RIEFF, November 1990). We are especially proud of all of our nominees and also of Fiction Editor RUST HILLS and Literary Editor WILL BLYTHE, who, beginning on page 79, have produced an occasionally harrowing, ultimately celebratory guide to that dreamscape that writers love to hate and hate to miss—Hollywood.

In addition, kudos are in order for Contributing Editor PETER MAAS, who recently won the 1991 Edgar Allen Poe Award for Best Fact Crime Book for *In a Child's Name* (Simon & Schuster). The Edgar, given out by the Mystery Writers' Association of America, is the only literary prize that is awarded by a panel of peers.

And lastly, JIM HARRISON's *Just Before Dark*, a collection of his travel, food, sports, and literary writings over the last twenty years, is being published this month by Clark City Press. We feel that this entitles Harrison to a one-month vacation, which is why he is taking this issue off. ☐



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Fergie  
on a rock

—by—  
Ann Crump,  
painter

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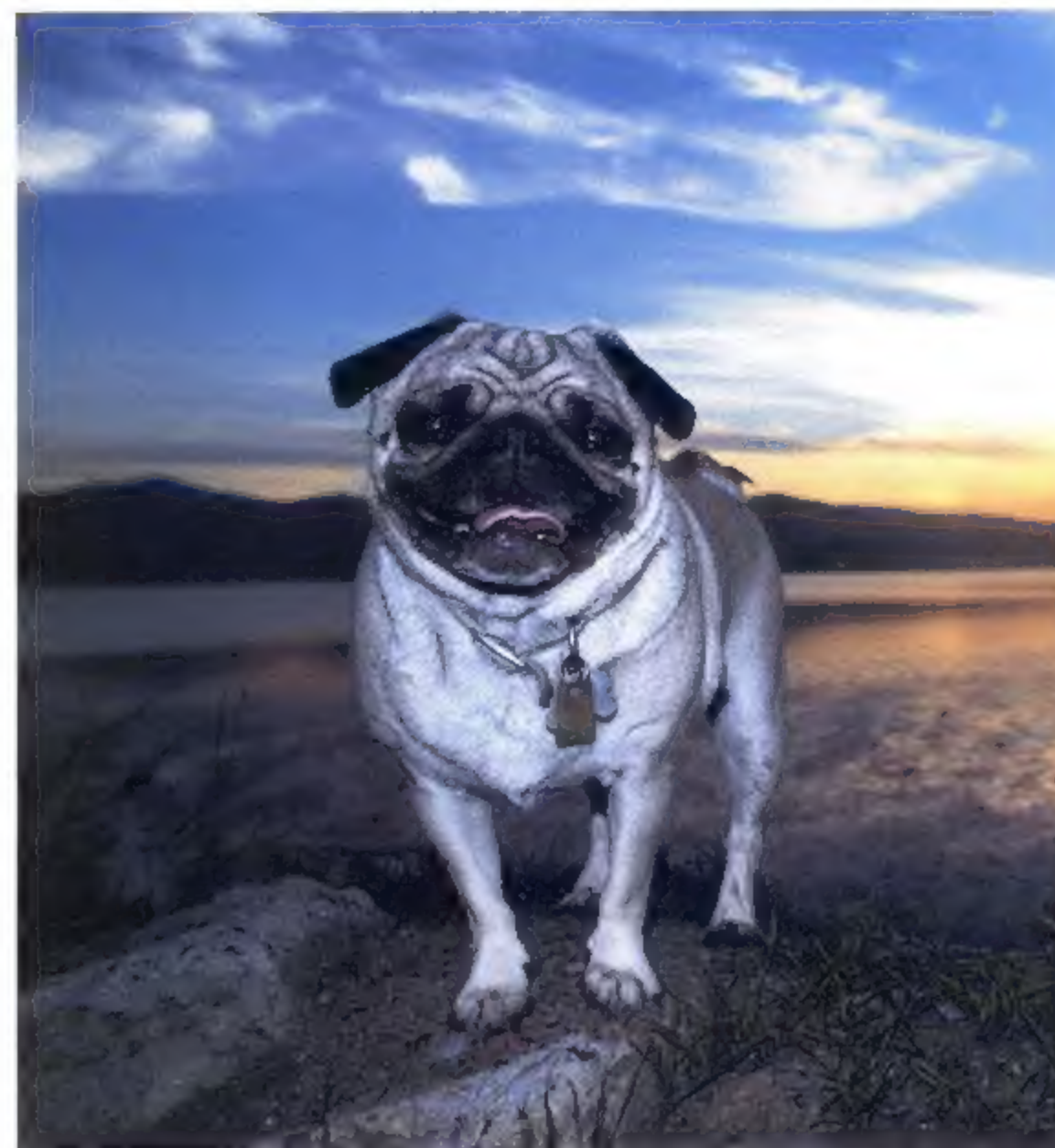
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## HANDLE WITH PASSION.

Passion is the 1991 MR2 Turbo's soul. The passion of Toyota designers to whom performance is the difference between cars that are meant to be driven and cars that are just meant to get you from here to there.

If passion is the MR2's soul, its heart is an engine that pumps out 200 turbo-charged horsepower and can take you from zero to 60 in 5.96 seconds.\* Thanks to its mid-engine design, the MR2 has the handling to handle that power.

Inside, the MR2 is an ergonomic tour de force and has the feel of a true cockpit. It's got a driver-side air bag Supplemental Restraint System (SRS)\*\* and, for those unlikely occasions when the road isn't entertainment enough, there is an optional seven-speaker stereo system with both cassette and compact disc players.

Why did Toyota build the MR2 Turbo with so much passion? So it could be handled with passion.

*"I love what you do for me."*



# Art and Politics

## Keeping Score with Money

It seems to be a law of American life that whatever enriches us anywhere except in the wallet inevitably becomes uneconomic.

RUSSELL BAKER



**I**F IT IS TRUE THAT YOU LEARN MORE ABOUT people by listening to them talk about money than you do by sleeping with them, we should all know a lot more about each other than we did a short time ago. Money talks, sure, but now more than ever, people talk about money.

Back when times weren't so tough, there was an ad campaign for Chase Manhattan bank that posed a reminder to anyone spending like there was no tomorrow. It read "There is a tomorrow." When tomorrow came, all who had not heeded this uncommonly sage ad copy started looking for their values in their credit card receipts and decided to make some changes. They spent less, and there were fewer parties. For the first time in years, rich people were thought to be shrewd as well as lucky. This is where we are now, and it is probably a good—at least for the economy. Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

It's not as easy being rich these days, but it remains as much

fun. In a simplistic variation on the old half-full/half-empty perception test, some people still think money is to spend, while others think it is to save. The former look like playboys while the latter appear to be good prospects for marriage or whatever—but not, of course, for a good time, which is the province of the wealthy, anyway. According to peering researchers, the overriding concern of most couples moving in together is no longer romance but economic need, while rich guys are still out there buying jewelry and sending flowers. But the most important thing to understand about the rich is that they don't think about spending or saving money as much as they use it to keep score.

There used to be lots of jokes about how it was better to be nouveau than never to be rich at all. These days, self-made wealth has much less of a distinction from fortunes that arrived as accidents of birth. What counts is which number is higher. It doesn't matter what your title is, or even what you actually do on the job, as long as you make the most money at the firm or agency or pop stand. Whoever gets the most, wins—not because you can buy the most sushi or CDs or ranchettes, but because you are dominant at the trough (not that any of this has anything to do with having enough to eat). The result is that even society hostesses are now judged more by how many securities they have accumulated in their own name than by how beautiful the table settings look in the candlelight or by their King Charles spaniel's haircut. Expenditure may rise to meet income for most people, but don't let it happen to you.

The Greek shipping tycoon Aristotle Onassis, who also had the good fortune to marry Jackie Kennedy, used to say that because he was known as a rich man he had to leave a substantial tip every time he checked his coat. And because he was rich, he tended to wear a very expensive topcoat, so expensive in fact that he had to insure it. Thus did Onassis figure that he saved himself more than \$20,000 a year by not wearing a coat at all. In 1965 dollars that had to be some coat, but otherwise his reasoning was flawless. No wonder Onassis died rich. T.M.



# Typologies:

## The New Soup Cans

**T**HE MERE FACT OF THE GRID IS surprising. Row upon row of ugly industrial structures photographed before a woolly gray sky. Bernd and Hilla Becher let no sentiment creep into these images of blast furnaces, no empathic smile, no captured moment of tender shared cognition, the pictures are a nightmare for every mush-head who ever felt compelled to hang a rabbit poster that reads, YOU'RE NO BUNNY TILL SOME BUNNY LOVES YOU.

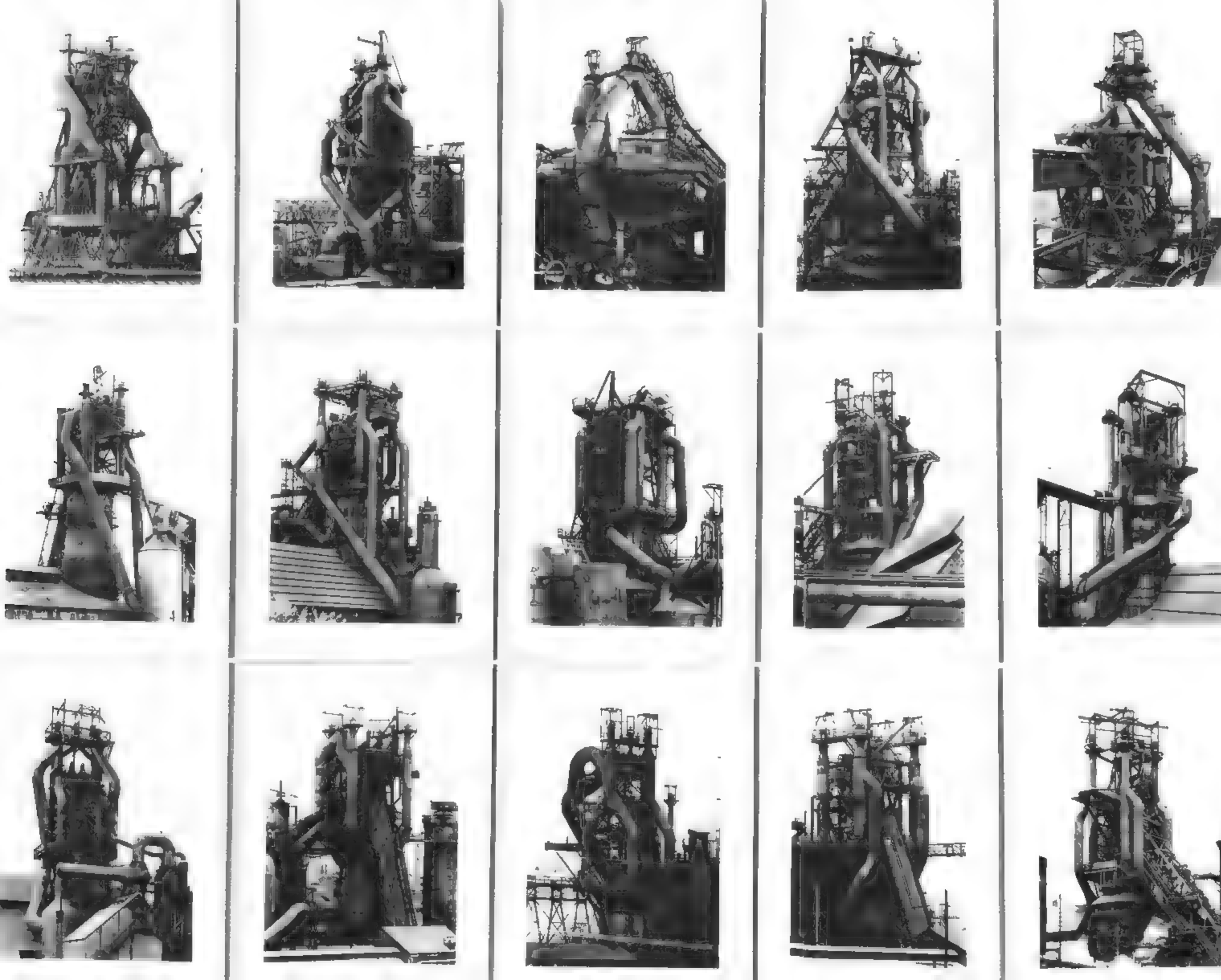
The groupings are called typologies. It's an idea that has been around in some form since Eugene Atget, but largely because of the work of the Bechers it is now gaining wider attention as a photographic methodology. The idea behind typologies is simple. They are collections of different images of the same type of object. Adherents monkishly photograph dozens of images and arrange them in a way that creates an interplay between the generic and the distinctive. Photographers have assembled typologies of trees, houses in L.A., young Germans, Jewish graveyards, streetscapes from around the world.

The Bechers have with entomological obsessiveness photographed furnaces, water towers, stone crushers, and other industrial icons for three decades. But until they won a first prize at last year's Venice Biennale and saw a number of their former students rise to prominence, the Bechers were the type of artists you'd most likely find patronized by the people who touch Dieter's monkey on *Saturday Night Live*'s "Sprockets." The first major international exhibit of typologies is currently touring the country; it's now in Akron and will arrive in Washington, D.C., this winter and San Francisco next summer. The images are also published in a book, *Typologies*, out in June from Rizzoli. The exhibit and book feature the Bechers, two of their students, Thomas Ruff and Thomas Struth, Edward Ruscha's emblematic gas station photographs from the 1960s, and a number of other artists' dozen images of orchard groves, vernacular architecture, and interiors.

No question the stuff is cool, in every sense. Oh, and some might say thunderingly pretentious. But there is resonance to the work, something more powerful than Warhol's Crash series or Mapplethorpe's lifeless staged portraits. The Bechers' photographs not only serve as memento mori of the fading industrial era, they imbue the most unlovely, unloved of objects with a fragile and poetic might. They are, perhaps, the last picture show.

No bunnies: Bernd and Hilla Becher's *Blast Furnace Heads*

—MICHAEL HIRSCHORN







By Charles Bowden  
(W. W. Norton)

Not a single conventional save-the-earth petri sweetens this intense meditation on rapacity in the desert, where the predators include not only mountain lions but homicidal drug dealers, hungry Indians, and S&P scamster Charles

Kearney. The desert, it seems, brings out the appetite in a creature whose most ecological-minded writers draw a clean line in the sand between man and nature. Bowden stomps all over the sanctimonious boundary, in the process merging history and natural history into a spooky and seamless narrative.



By Philip K. Dick  
Vintage

In 1974, Philip K. Dick, the hopped up sci-fi writer with the beatific vision, claimed his brainpan had been smote by a "transcendental-rational mind." Talk like that, and the *Valis* trilogy it inspired, thrust his already-ardent cult to lower depths of weirdness. The Dick cult has burgeoned since his death, in 1982, and *Valis* (1981), newly reprinted along with the rest of the trilogy, presents Dick at his most wiggled out. Horselover Fat, rendered loony by a pink beam of godsent information, tries to make sense out of that lunacy called reality. So, what is reality? *Valis*. And who is *Valis*? God. And how is God these days? Totally deranged.



By Asdaar Gray  
(Random House)

Further proof that when it comes to scary notions of sex and degradation, we're a country of Marie Osmonds compared with the Brits. The action of this wicked novel is detonated by a lonely, fatally self-contained woman no longer able to suppress her desire for something like a tight black leather skirt with silver fastening studs up the rear. It's all very funny and thoroughly perverse—the fact that the kinky skirt tale gets to the melting point in the first chapter and then disappears until the next-to-last is only one of its tortures.

# 50 simple things you can do to make a buck off the earth

SOME ARE MADE FROM GARBAGE, SOME JUST ARE garbage. All are real, culled from "green" mail order catalogues and press releases, of which there are an alarming number these days. Laid out page by page, they would cover the country to a depth of several inches. But that's okay, they're biodegradable.

- 1.** Ecologne. "Nonsynthetic, nonpolluting after shave."
- 2.** The Sunline "solar clothes dryer" (retractable clothesline).
- 3.** Enviromatch dating service
- 4.** Recycled-paper Post-it notes. "One small step. .", one giant eleven page press kit.
- 5.** Oil Spill: The Game.
- 6.** Recycled plastic bird feeders. "Molded to look just like wood " "It will last forever!"
- 7.** Nonpolluting reel (hand-push) mowers. "Lawn Mowers for the Lifestyle of a New Generation."
- 8.** The Déja Shoe. Shoes made from recycled materials. Only slightly uglier than the recycled shoes you find at Goodwill.
- 9.** EnvirOmints. Individually wrapped chocolate mints with full-color endangered species collectors' cards inside.
- 10.** The Muzak Natural Sounds series.
- 11.** Vegetatum vegetable jelly. Never mind that petroleum jelly makes use of an otherwise discarded refinery by product.
- 12.** Project Green dioxin-free paper luncheon napkins.
- 13.** 100 percent natural, biodegradable slug repellent.
- 14.** Eco-Popper "Prevents landscape from being strewn with can tabs" and "helps eliminate broken fingernails " (Otherwise known as a can opener.)
- 15.** The Calvert Group "environmentally supportive mutual funds."

**Note:** Numbers 16 through 50 have been omitted to reduce waste and conserve natural resources. Thank you. Peace.

MARY ROACH

## Off the Charts By Kurt Loder

## Star Time

**James Brown, *Powder*** An astonishing document: seventy-one tracks, spread over four CDs and nearly thirty years, in which the great good-foot god earns every appellation ever strewn his way. Brown's deconstruction of the dance-floor bear has by now become so pervasive, influential, it seems almost a feat of genetic engineering—flailing limbs have never twitched in quite the same way since.

Brown started out, in 1956, in a raw, gospel-blues mode (a glorious period more fully explored in the earlier Polydor two-disc set, *Roots of a Revolution*), but the polyrhythms were piling up as early as 1959, when he recorded "Good, Good Lov'n," and by the mid-1960s, with such epochal hits as "Out of Sight," "I Got You I Feel Good," and the prophetic "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," Brown and his machine-tooled band were entering wild new rhythmic terrain, tied with whupash horn lines, chattering guitars, and strange, funky grunts. By the

1970s they had all but disappeared into the groove, and were regularly chunking out such sweat classics as "Soul Power," "Saper Bad," and "Get Up, I Feel Like Being a Sex Machine." The great stuff's all here, along with such bracing addenda as a live 1988 stamped-through "There Was a Time" that rivals anything on the incendiary 1963 *Live at the Apollo* (reissued on CD last year) for sheer, cleansing frenzy.

Seventeen of these tracks were number-one R&B hits. But like Little Richard, and pretty much like Chuck Berry who topped the chart just once with a wretched novelty, way past his prime, James Brown has never had a number one pop hit—has never once, in other words, attained that summit routinely occupied by such acts as Herman's Hermits, the Singing Nun, and the Strawberry Alarm Clock. No doubt there's an explanation for this sad, funkless fact, but don't bother looking for it on this album.



Helmut don't surf.

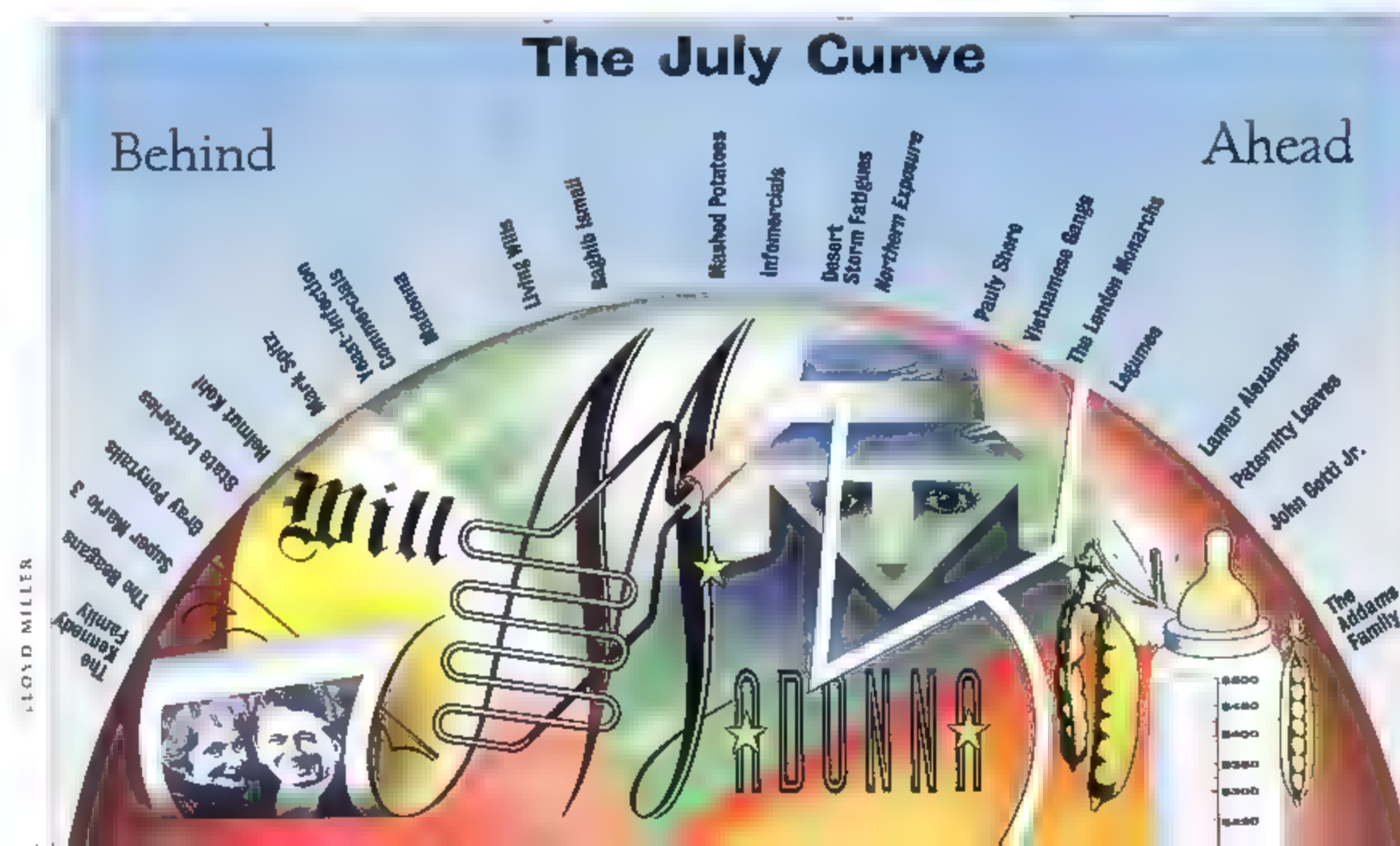
## Brazil Classics 3

**Various** Luaka Bop/Warner Bros. David Byrne audits tropica exotica with a popwise northern ear, and this may be the most immediately appealing instrument of his *Brazil Classics* series. Forró is country dance music made with capering accordions and clanking iron triangles, and its instantly infectious effect is not unlike that of Louisiana Cajun music. The late singer and accordionist Luiz Gonzaga, who pioneered the form in the early 1940s, is featured on four latter-day tracks here, one of which—

the relentlessly percussive "O Fole Roncou" ("The Belows Roared"): a deft chair-bound appreciation.

## Surfin' Germany

Various (Bear Family import) Every column likes to offer its little cornball nod to the season at hand, and this stupefying compilation of 1960s German beat groups covering U.S. surf hits *auf Deutsch* is mine. Surf music was the whitest of the major pop-rock genres to begin with, and hearing it essayed by these delightfully clueless dinks is akin to going snowblind. By the time you've sat in gaping wonderment through such ill-advised undertakings as Die Crazy Girls' version of "Walk Don't Run" and the Mama Betty's Band defilement of "Fun, Fun, Fun," you'll be too far gone in mirth to bother pointing out that "Abigail Beecher," the old Freddy Cannon hit, had nothing to do with surf music, or that the Beach Boys, who pop up with a German language version of "In My Room," put the other twelve acts on the bill firmly and forever in their place—wherever on earth that might be. **E**





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OF CALIFORNIA



# American Journal

## By Pete Hamill

### A Confederacy of Complainers

**ONE RAINY MORNING** this past spring, Colin Powell went home at last to Morris High School in the South Bronx. He had been gone for thirty-seven years. But now Powell was one of the most famous generals in recent American history. Thanks to the crisp press and tough intelligence he displayed in the eyes of the world during the seven months of Operation Desert Shield/Storm, but he was proving that, for at least a moment, you can go home again. He stepped briskly from a limousine into a tight cocoon of security men

and school officials, wearing his new celebrity lightly. He smiled. He shook hands. He ignored the small crowd of black and Latino men across the street, huddled in front of a methadone clinic. And he didn't seem to notice the abandoned husks of gutted buildings down the slope of Boston Road. As a man reaped in Vietnam, he has taught himself to ignore the defeats of the past. He glanced up at the school entrance, shook his head in a morose way, and went on. I walked across the street to talk to the junkies.

"What the hell do you know about being down?" said a man named Roderick. "I seen him on the TV. That man's whiter than George Jackson. Bigger. Look so pretty! Man got everything he want, college, own a that shit."

Another joined in, then a third and a fourth, and soon the familiar rap was flowing. They'd drawn the wrong hand in life; they were poor and black, or poor and Hispanic, or poor and blackless and therefore never had a chance in a World They Never Made. Their fathers had ran off when they were young, or their mothers, or their girlfriends. They'd been locked up by bad cops, beaten up or flunked out or sneered at by racist schoolteachers, abused by mean Army sergeants or heartless welfare investigators or cruel bosses. Look at us, they said. Look what has been done to us. By Vietnam or racism or capitalism. I stood there for a few minutes, listening to the old familiar story, and then I ran across the street to see Powell talk to some kids.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was impressive. The core of his twenty-minute talk, delivered in a gymnasium with a broken roof, was made of platitudes: Stay in school and get a diploma, don't

take drugs, because that's *stupid*. But such promises were given some renewed power because Powell now spoke with the authority of success. In addition, he was a black man who'd come from Kew-Forest Street, down at the bottom of the broken tundra of the South Bronx, one of the worst slums under the American flag. Certainly Powell had arrived here with his own cards of identity. But then, after the catches, he delivered what was probably the morning's most important message—and its most subtle.

"It seems like if you're Puerto Rican or Hispanic," he said, "be proud of that. But don't let it become a *problem*. Let it become somebody else's problem."

I has spoke a man who clearly has spent his life refusing to become a victim.

TO HEAR COLIN POWELL THAT MORNING was refreshing, even moving, because we live now in a nation that's sick with what I call victimism. Since the collapse of communism and the continuing mistrust of capitalism, victimism might now be the dominant American ideology. Many whites insist that they are innocent victims of vengeful blacks, who are portrayed in their fearful fantasies as marauding bands coming to get their wives, sisters, mothers, or selves. Meanwhile, Hispanics in big cities claim to be the victims of whites and blacks, while I've heard blacks claim that AIDS was invented to kill blacks and crack cocaine was invented as part of an an-



**Can you hear it? The all-encompassing American whine of victimhood: It's not my fault!**



HAVEN'T WE MET SOMEWHERE BEFORE?

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Even the most jaded critics have fallen head over heels. Every major automotive magazine judged Miata to be one of the best cars in the U.S. In fact, *Road & Track* named it "One of the Ten Best Cars In The World." Kind of makes it hard to resist, doesn't it?

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## American Journal By Pete Hamill

riplack conspiracy set up by the CIA and the Medellin cartel, both of which are pumping it into the ghettos to debase black society.

At the same time, all sorts of people say they are victims of Asians, from the professional Japan bashers in Washington to those on the street who believe the Korean greengrocer must be engaged in some nefarious plot that will end with a takeover of America. And there are Asians among us who believe they are victims, too; they are angry because someone once called them the Model Minority, they're mad because some universities are creating quotas to keep out Asians and Asian Americans; in the Miss Saigon uproar, they were furious because the part of a Eurasian went to a Caucasian.

This peculiar American capacity for anger seems without limit. Millions of women claim to be the victims of men, who men are rimov laws and stake claims to their own status as victims of feminist hypocrisy. ("How can they claim I'm oppressing them," one divorced friend said, "and then take my money?") The American day seems to begin with one long and penetrating whine: *I look what they are doing to me!* And "they" are Catholics or Protestants or Jews, liberals or conservatives, northerners or southerners, eastern bankers or western oilmen, members of the NAACP or the NRA, slaves to the AFL-CIO, with occasional believers in the remaining power of the International Communist Conspiracy or the Fraternal Commission. Life in these semi-United States often seems to be an illustration of Jean Paul Sartre's dictum that he is other people.

In the end, all adherents of victimism have a few things in common. Most of them are miserable. They hate their jobs, their wives, their husbands or kids or dogs, the cities in which they live, the food they eat, the politicians who lead them, the newspapers. Peter Arnett, their mothers and fathers, and almost all foreigners. For a few brief weeks, they were happy hating Saddam Hussein. But then they noticed that people they hated also hated Hussein, so they retreated back into life as gray, throbbing muscles of resentment.

More important, victimism has one overriding slogan, the response to a most all questions about the source of their misery and victimhood: *It's not my fault!* Dropped out of high school? Not my fault.

Started shooting heroin or smoking crack when others passed up both? Not my fault. Married the wrong people, got caught robbing stores, crashed the car with a load on? Not me, man, not my fault. Victimism implies that nobody is personally responsible for the living of a life. The detests, disappointments, and failures that were once thought to be part of each human being's portion on this earth are not only unacceptable now, considered soul-killing, career-bruising, life-threatening, but they are always the fault of *somebody else*.

I've heard the endless complaint on all levels of society. In a ghetto, I see a woman point to a hole in the bathroom wall and demand to know why the landlord won't fix it. Well, I ask, how do I get there? It just appeared, she says. Why doesn't she fix it herself? What? What? Are you crazy? *It's not my fault!* This could be explained as the heritage of fifty years of warfare. But I hear the echo out in East Hampton on a summer afternoon, where one of those captains of industry is complaining about the Japanese. We shouldn't even let their cars in here! Why not? Because the Japanese are unfair. In what way? He mumbles about rice, cigarettes, other items not easily admitted to Japan, and how the Japanese won't let Americans into the construction business, and how they insist on writing their documents in Japanese, the crafty buggers. I say, What does all that have to do with car sales? The captain of industry growls. Well, he says, what would you do about our car sales? Make better cars, I suggest. He looks at me, eyes widening. What? Don't you understand? The Japanese are giving us the shaft! We are falling behind, but hey, tella, get on the team! *It's not our fault!*

On the simplest level, victimism disguises itself with the sophomoric rigidity of political correctness. Sarcasm, the demand for PC is one of the more comical developments in American life. We have people eating out of garbage cans while humorless legions of ignorant kids are combing language, literature, and the corner bar for evidence of expression that will offend, hurt, or enrage *somebody*. They warp, bend, fold, spread, and otherwise mutilate words that they find offensive, and in the process throw out all notions of freedom of speech. The slogan of these incipient Stalinists seems to be: I'm offended, therefore I am.

But the sad comedy of victimism usually plays on a wider stage, and in some cases the scripts are straight out of the theater of the absurd. The drug raid on three University of Virginia fraternity houses was partly in response to complaints that the lo-

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## American Journal By Pete Hamill

cal cops on v went after drug dealers and users in the black part of town. In Los Angeles, one accused drug dealer is claiming that his arrest in a sweep of dealers working near public schools was a "separate and unequal" prosecution, targeting minorities. Both charges are bogus, imagine the outcry if the police stopped policing minority neighborhoods, leaving the crack dealer to operate under the commandments of laissez-faire capitalism. Victimism insists that the police can never be decent; if they do the job, they are hurting a vulnerable people; if they refuse to do the job, they are contributing to genocide. God bless America, it's a laugh a minute around here.

But there is a darker, more dangerous aspect to victimism. It can be used as a license. Bernhard Goetz was a star in the park of Victimist theory. So are all the other nerds who shoot first. All they need is the perception of being victims. In the past few years, we have seen a number of cases in which battered wives have burned, shot, or stabbed their husbands and then been acquitted on the grounds that they were the victims. I have no doubt that many of these women were abused by the idiots they married. Was murder really the only solution? At what point does the claim to victimhood serve as a license to kill?

WATCHING COLIN POWELL, I thought about the world in which he was young and how hard he must have worked to make the journey of his life. He graduated from Morris High School in February, 1954, a few months before *Brown v. Board of Education*. He didn't need the Supreme Court to get him into college; he'd already been admitted to the City College of New York, where you needed a 90 average to get in. But Colin Powell didn't brag to the assembled students, and though he reminded them that they had greater opportunities than he did, he didn't whine about the timing of his life. He was another tough guy who didn't need to show how tough he was as he played the hand he was dealt.

So he'd already learned some lessons from his parents about work and struggle. And he must have been free of self-pity, that most corrosive of human emotions. He was shaped by forces now almost forgotten: the immigrant work experience, the Depression, the tradition of hard work.

I'm not sure when—or more important why—self-pity was elevated into the great all-encompassing American whine.

One possible explanation is the presence in our collective imaginations of two gigantic twentieth-century events: the Holocaust and Hiroshima. These were real, with millions of true victims, but they also live in most of us on the level of hallucination and nightmare. They were not problems of manners. They were not offenses of language. Even today, it's difficult for many people to deal with them. There's a valid argument that no words, no pictures, no movies can ever fully express the horror of the Holocaust or the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But an awed silence can't satisfy everyone. Some Americans might be adapting the robes of the victim in solidarity with the victims of this century's horrors, others might don them in annoyance, saying in effect, Yeah, that's terrible, but *I have my own problems*. And some might be trying to relieve some tangled feelings of national guilt for the annihilation of so many Japanese civilians, for failing to act to save the European Jews when it was clear that the Holocaust had begun.

I don't pretend to have the answers to such cosmic questions. But I do know that Americans, who once worshipped in the church of self-reliance, have moved to another house of worship, where they are in the grip of a fever of victimism. Its whining propaganda insists upon respect without accomplishment, while its punitive theory of society is enforced by lawyers. The amount of energy consumed by the furies of victimism is extraordinary. The wasted lives of those who buy its premise add up to a genuine tragedy that's made worse by being a self-inflicted wound. In this state of mind, the nation can never heal itself, it's too busy blaming others to look into its own heart. But all of us, including the most damaged, would be helped by a moratorium on self-pity. We need less Freud and more Marcus Aurelius, less adolescent posturing and more stoic maturity, less weeping and gnashing of teeth and more bawdy horselaughs in the face of adversity.

In all the cities of America, the young are now being introduced to the world through the shaping ideology of victimism. How sad. I wish Colin Powell could talk to all of them, black, white, or Latino, male or female, of every class and religion, and tell them: Be proud, live life on your own skin, and whatever is bothering you, hey, man, make it someone else's problem. ☐

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really sure and it  
probably should be.

taken some crucial steps towards changing that. Through an effort called "Responsible Care."

Many of us, for example, are now regularly holding community meetings. Which give the people who live near our plants an opportunity to tell us about their fears and concerns. And to ask questions of the people who actually run the plant, day in and day out.

Others are offering tours to anyone inter-

ested in a first-hand look at the way we make, handle and dispose of chemicals. We'll also send you our **"Responsible Care" Brochure**, which details other ways we're working to keep you informed.

So that the next time you're driving by that chemical plant, like you do every day, and one of your kids asks you what they make in there, you can tell him.

**The Chemical  
Manufacturers Association.**

We want you to know.





Warm days. Warmer nights.  
And only one thing  
could cool them down.

In the 1920's there was no air conditioning, but there certainly was plenty of heat.

The First World War not only freed nations, it freed inhibitions. Romance was in. Not just on the silver screen, but in ballrooms, living rooms and verandas all over America.

Never had there been a generation that generated so much passion. And no time did passions run higher than in the long, hot summers of the Jazz Age.



Gilbey's. The Authentic Gin.

People finally had time. Time for the good life. And time for romance. And after long days and long nights of play nothing could cool them down like a G&T. A Gilbey's and tonic. That's because the same gin that made the perfect martini also made the consummate gin and tonic.

True, these days we do have other ways to keep our cool. But don't they, compared to an ice cold Gilbey's and tonic, somehow leave you cold?

# The Sporting Life

## By Mike Lupica

And the Wiener is ...

**FROM NOW ON**, we will call them the Andre Awards—Andres—for the most annoying people in the world of sports. They are named, of course, after that tennis player, the single most annoying athlete in the world. ¶ Once you make the list—and Andre Agassi sure made the list in 1990—you cannot be honored the next year. So Agassi's sweaty little neon T-shirt has been retired. But I thought he should be singled out in some way, because even though a year has passed, I do not believe anybody is yet in his class.

Let's face it. The kid is a triple threat. He can annoy you on the court, he can annoy you in his television commercials, and he can annoy you in interviews. The only people who seem to like him, outside of family and that attractive entourage of his, are the reporters who hitch a ride in his Lamborghini. I call this *trooom* journalism, by the way. Last year, Agassi took reporters from *The National* and *The New York Times* for a spin, and they both came away calling him the nicest thing to happen to tennis since tie breakers.

Anyway, they are the Andres from now on. So sit back and relax as we journey to lovely Tarkan Pavilion in beautiful Las Vegas, Nevada, for the second annual awards ceremony. And the winners for 1990-1991 are:

**The Duke University Basketball Team.** I mean, is there a group of athletes anywhere else in the world more precious than the Judd Nelsons of college basketball?

If you were wondering what happened to Mr. Chips's kids, now you know. They won the national championship and made a campus full of vamps swoon. The Dukes don't ever seem to get it. What we want to know is how they cracked UNLV's amoeba defense, not how rich and varied their college experience in Durham has been.

I like Bobby Harley when he isn't whining to the refs. And you have to respect Mike Krzyzewski's record, even though he once convened a meeting of student sportswriters and proceeded to evaluate their work with language most often reserved for referees. Bob Knight pulls a stunt like that, and he's doing time with Michael Milken. But

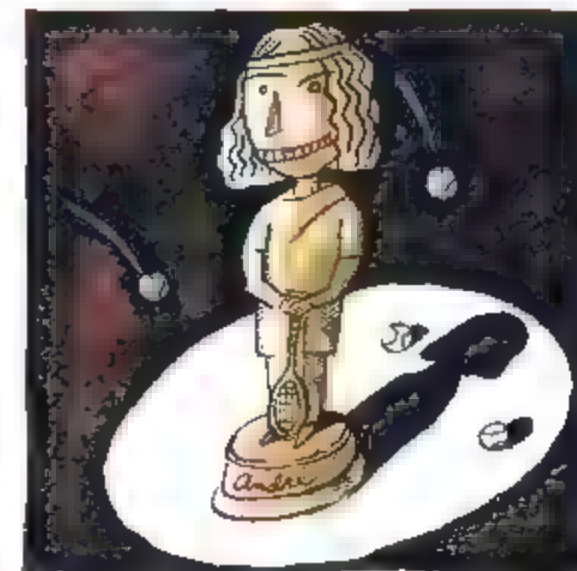
Coach K—he gets away with it.

And how about Christian Laettner? Now there's a fun kid. He was once described as the center for the Dead Poets Society, smug and aloof. Fanny, I don't remember anybody from Dead Poets L. ever elbowing an opponent upside the head.

If the world was ever going to embrace the little Devils from Durham, it would have been last spring. First, they beat Vegas, which had been designated by some broadcasters as one of the greatest teams of all time. Then they whipped Kansas and threw off their image as a bunch of chokers, and did anybody so much as shake a fist? Of course not. They left it up to you to decide whether Duke, in its moment of triumph, had won the national championship or taken the team trophy at the national spelling bee.

**George Steinbrenner.** Not for paying \$40,000 to gambler Howie Spira. Not for offering more than a dozen excuses for making those payments. The man who fired more managers and general managers than anybody in baseball history gets his Andre for suddenly turning sensitive on us.

In April George had a chance to take his case to the people. He sat in a public courtroom face-to-face with Spira, the guy who ruined everything for him, and all he could do was cry. Spira's up on extortion charges and Steinbrenner does a full Jimmy Swaggart on the witness stand.



Presenting  
the second  
annual Andre  
Awards for  
distinguished  
achievement  
in sports  
obnoxiousness





# THE PERFECT RECESS



**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Quitting Smoking Now Greatly Reduces Serious Risks to Your Health.**

## The Sporting Life

By Mike Lupica

Jim and Tammy Faye were more convincing, but George gets the Andre.

**Minnie Minoso.** I'm supposed to write my congressman because a sixty-eight year-old guy can't get one more at bat?

I don't think so

It's time for Minofo to get on line for tickets to the Perry Como concert tour and stop bothering us with all this nonsense

**Victor Kiam.** Give the guy the benefit of the doubt. Maybe he didn't have enough information when he first referred to the Zeke Mowatt-Lisa Olson locker room incident as "a flyspeck in the ocean." Forget that there were witnesses. Take Kiam at his word. Say he didn't call the *Boston Herald* reporter "a classic bitch" or mean to suggest that she was asking for trouble by going into the Patriots locker room. Give the little electric-razor man all of that.

Then present him with an Andre for going to a sports dinner in Stamford, Connecticut, a few months later and asking his audience, "What do Iraqi Scuds and Lisa Olson have in common?"

That one goes beyond donkey. It shows that Kiam is a dumb, meanspirited, unrepentant sexist. You think that dinner was the first time he told that joke?

I don't

**Billy Packer and Dick Vitale.** Screen presence alone is enough to qualify these two college basketball analysts for this award, but their participation in the UNLV booster club puts them over the top. As charter members of the Jerry Tarkanian Defense Committee, they did everything but wear buttons that said FREE THE RUNNIN' REBEL ONE! on telecasts last March. They reworked Tark the Shark's sagging image and turned him loose as Tark the Manatee.

Right. We're supposed to believe the NCAA made up all twenty-nine new rules violations it mailed to UNLV president Robert Maxson this spring.

Give Packer and Vitale their Andres,  
and let Vitale make the acceptance speech,  
BAAAAABYYYYYYYYYYY!!!!!!

**Tom Monaghan and Bo Schembechler.** Make any proper list of the greatest radio voices in the history of baseball and Detroit's Ernie Harwell is on it. Make a list of the gentlemen in the game and Harwell tops it. At seventy three, he sounds as youthful and clear as ever. But Tigers owner Tom Monaghan and team president Bo Schembechler didn't see fit to re-

new his contract for next year. They let him finish this season, but that is their lousy way of giving a baseball immortal 162 games to clear out his desk.

Bill Long, the general manager of WJR Radio, was eventually tagged as the bad guy, but that doesn't work for me. When it comes to announcers, those guys only do what owners and team presidents tell them to do.

Monaghan and Schembechler don't belong in the same ball park with Ernie Harwell.

**Evander Holyfield.** In his way, he was every bit as brave as George Foreman in their title fight. He showed both chin and heart. And better still, he is the anti-Tyson.

But this business with the ballet coach, this gets him an Andre, no problem. Did the Brown Bomber have a ballet coach? Did Jack Dempsey? I don't think so.

Is this the toughest guy in the universe or is this Sally Field?

**John Elway.** If I find him somewhat annoying when the Broncos get to the Super Bowl, imagine my difficulty on a Sunday during the regular season.

**Charles Barkley.** Before this season, I always looked forward to watching Barkley play. He was sassy and funny—one of the great personalities in sports. Then, like a lot of stars who have fallen completely in love with the sound of their own voices, he lost all sense of when to shut his mouth.

After one loss last season, he said, "I'm going to go home and beat my wife." Then, while trying to silence a heckler in New Jersey, he inadvertently spit on an eight year-old girl.

An Andre for this guy and umbrellas for the rest of us.

**The WLAF.** I would ride around all day in a car with Agassi, before I would watch a World League of American Football game.

### HONORABLE MENTION

**Sam Wycho.** He was edged out by Victor Kiam this year, but, alas, he's still in finishing school. He practically hit for the cycle last season when it came to the locker-room issue. First, he barred Denise Tom of *USA Today* from the Bengals locker room. Then he tried to make a joke of it at a postgame press conference by donning a towel featuring a drawing of a man in a loincloth. At a charity auction

this winter, he offered a tour of his locker room to the highest woman bidder

If Sam Wyche can coach in a Super Bowl, anyone can, right?

**Dean Smith.** His farewell tour of the Kansas bench during the Final Four, shaking hands with every player while North Carolina was still very much in the game, was bush league all the way.

**The Oakland A's.** The A's looked like sure winners in the Most Annoying Team category until Duke won the national championship. After the Reds swept the World Series, Dave Stewart said that Oakland was still the best team in baseball.

And before the series had even begun, Tony La Russa told *The New York Times* he had a feeling his team was going to lose. Rickey Henderson started the new season in full pout when the A's refused to renegotiate his contract for the second year in a row. And Jose Canseco? He is such a solid baseball citizen that the A's had to hire Reggie Jackson to hold his hand.

**BYYYYY!** Buddy Ryan. For benching Randall Cunningham during the Redskins-Eagles play

off game Cunningham is the closest thing the NFL has to Michael Jordan, and he was the Eagles' only chance to get something going against the Redskins. Fortunately, Eagles owner Norman Braman benched Buddy a few days later. Now Ryan can move on to other exciting career opportunities, perhaps playing the sheriff in future sequels to *Smokey and the Bandit*.

**Brent Musburger.** He's still whining about CBS, so he earns an honorable mention for the second year in a row. To our good fortune, the only work he'll find in Barcelona next summer will be in ABC's WLAF broadcast booth.

**Jim Boshelm.** Speaking of whiners, why is it that every time a bunch of college basketball players get caught driving a rental car that goes for eighty cents a day, we have to listen to Syracuse's coach lecture about the difficulty of policing a college-basketball program?

**Wayne Gretzky.** Gretzky is one of the great team athletes of all time. He is one of two players in my lifetime—Bobby Orr is the other—who could make me care about hockey. So I say this to him from the heart: Get out of the baseball-card business. ☐

**Give Packer and Vitale their Andres, and let Vitale make the acceptance speech  
BAAAAABYYYYY!**





WHILE OTHERS TRY  
TO ACHIEVE A BALANCE OF  
LUXURY AND PERFORMANCE,  
WE PREFER TO OFFER  
AN ABUNDANCE OF BOTH.

---

Introducing the Acura Vigor. Its  
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and is available with rich,  
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features include anti-lock brakes  
and a driver's side air bag. In other words,  
the Acura Vigor demonstrates  
that a "balance" of luxury and perfor-  
mance will no longer be an  
acceptable excuse to sacrifice either

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V I G O R





# Hangin' Out

## By George Plimpton

### Waiting for Gannon

IN MARCH I GOT A CALL from the *Late Night with David Letterman* show from a Mr. Frank Gannon, a producer and what is known in the talk show trade as a segment coordinator. I was out of town at the time, but the message was that he had an interest in the column I had written in these pages about April Fools' Day, and he left a number to call. From this I deduced they wanted me as a guest on their April 1 show to chat about famous practical jokes and hoaxes and so on with Mr. Letterman—appropriate enough,

since he strikes me as the type who wishes every day could be lived as April Fools' Day.

When I telephoned and said I was returning the producer's call, I was told that Mr. Gannon was "on the floor" somewhere but couldn't be found. Well, that's too bad, I said, and left the message that I was back in town and expected to hear from him.

Nothing happened for a few days. Impelled by curiosity, I began to put in calls to him. Sometimes I was told he was in a meeting. More often, he was "somewhere about" and couldn't be found. After a while Mr. Gannon began to emerge in my mind's eye as a shadowy, furtive man with so much on his mind about coordinating segments that he was last seen scuttling up and down the back fire stairs, slipping in and out of large packing boxes. A kind of phantom figure haunting the mausolean gloom of the NBC sound stages, he left just an occasional trace to indicate that in fact he did exist—a half-eaten sandwich, a single shoe out of which he had stepped in his haste to avoid contact with the outside world.

I realized, of course, after perhaps the twenty-first call, that I was getting what's called the old runaround: my presence was not wanted on Mr. Letterman's show on April 1 or any other time. Mr. Gannon was telling me this by refusing to do so—a spineless procedure that is typical in show business. His tribe seems incapable of saying into a phone: "Hey, thanks for calling but we can't use you," or whatever. Instead, they hide in their packing cases.

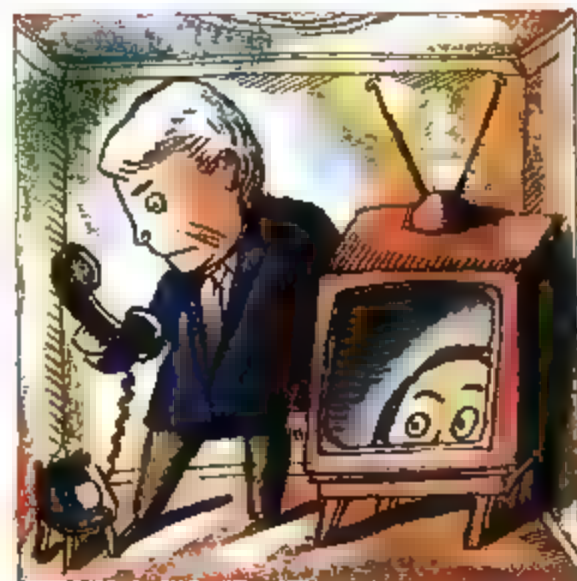
I suspect a scholarly treatise could be written about show business and the phone. The telephone is theoretically a means of communication. Not so in television or movieland. Nobody I know is listed,

whatever their professional standing—assistant director, cameraman, gaffer, best boy, et al.—as being unlisted is apparently a sign of status. If your name is in the Beverly Hills/Hollywood directory it means you're unimportant and probably out of work. There are so few pages that it is by far the easiest telephone directory, if one is up to such strong man tricks, to tear in half. The result of all this is that nobody can reach anybody, which is why things are as bad as they are out there.

It's very hard for me to understand this. Nobody dares come to the phone! Think of the missed opportunities! Suppose in Mr. Gannon's case I was trying to get a message to him that Kim Basinger had spotted him in the shadows of a packing case during a *Late Night* appearance and had been absolutely smitten but was too timid to call him on her own.

Ah, well. I kept calling Mr. Gannon right up to April 1. I had an entire lineup of entertaining pranks to describe to Letterman. A friend in London was poised to send me the latest of the hoaxes that invariably appear in the newspapers there on April Fools' Day so that I could describe them that evening. (A few years ago he sent me from one of the dailies an article titled "The Dark Side of the World of Beatrix Potter" that described horrendous goings-on in the private life of the gentle inventor of Peter Rabbit.)

So I had all this to offer, and if Letterman was pleased and things were rolling along, I could tell him about an extraordinary hoax recounted to me



**I had tales to tell, of pranks and Michael Arlen's rented parents. But where was my producer?**

**Guess who's behind this great tasting non-alcoholic brew.**

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realize the obvious...nobody but Heineken could have come up with something so good.

**Buckler. The only thing that's closer to beer...is beer.**



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# Hanging Out

By George Plimpton

by Michael Arlen, the *New Yorker* writer and an old friend. It involved his father, a very celebrated fellow in his time. Mr. Arlen was the author of an enormously successful novel titled *The Green Hat*. He was very much the expatriate dandy; indeed, he introduced Duff Twysden to Ernest Hemingway, who later immortalized her as Lady Brett in *The Sun Also Rises*. Michael wrote a lovely memoir about his father, titled *Exiles*. Here is the gist of what he wrote me about the hoax.

"Did I ever tell you about the time I was forced to hire false parents? In the early Fifties I was in the Army in Europe, first with *Stars & Stripes* in Germany and then in London, where my boss was a certain Brigadier General O. K. Wilmerding. Actually I was not supposed to be in London and this is where my problems began. I was supposed to be stationed outside London at an Air Force base from which I could most easily cover the Air Force golf tournaments for *Stars & Stripes*. Golt, you see, occupied such a large part of General Wilmerding's thoughts.

"As it happened, I was actually living in a little three-floor walk-up in Brompton Square, because the week I arrived in England my father, also in London, had become sick, and I was given permission by General Wilmerding's deputy to attend him, so to speak. Thus my flat in Brompton Square and my daily commute back and forth to the air base, a very agreeable arrangement for all concerned.

"Then, alas, all too rapidly, my father recovered and returned to New York. Had I been made of better stuff I would have told General Wilmerding. But I didn't. He had other things to worry about—war, golf, and so on. But I hadn't reckoned on his secret yearning for the cosmopolitan life, for what used to be called rabbing shoulders with celebrities. At first it was casual asides: 'How's the old man?' Then, 'I bet your old man knows a lot of famous people.' Then, 'Say, Arlen, I'd really like to meet your old man—of course, when he's feeling better.' Of course. Maybe I could persuade my father to come back to London and meet General Wilmerding. Not bloody likely. Besides, my father hated generals, so the meeting, if it had occurred, would not have been a success. Maybe I could tell General Wilmerding that my father had died. Suddenly. Tragically. But Wilmerding would want to go to the funeral in the event it might be at-

tended by famous people.

"For a long time I did nothing, hoping the problem would go away. But it didn't. One day Wilmerding came up to me with ominous good cheer. 'I'm going into London this afternoon. I thought I'd give your father a call. I thought of saying, 'Oh, no, he's just taken a turn for the worse.' The doctor says no phone calls.' But this was just stalling. So I devised the party.

"Ken Tynan, the theater critic, helped me find the actors—a wonderful fellow named Charles Banks with to play my father, a woman called Edie somebody to play my mother. I remember thinking how completely horrified my parents would have been—but what did it matter, I reasoned. General Wilmerding had never seen them, never seen photographs. He only wanted to rub shoulders.

"I hired two rooms at the Dorchester for an afternoon and an additional half-dozen actors who looked like important people. I asked such friends as I could muster and invited General and Mrs. O. K. Wilmerding. Was it a success? Well, I think it was. There was a dangerous moment when my father, clearly drunk, started making passes at Mrs. Wilmerding. I had to take him aside and tell him to get back in character. But Wilmerding himself didn't seem to mind. I think he probably felt that having his wife punched was a treat for both of them—a rare glimpse of life at the top, the decadence of famous people and so on. The whole thing seems to me quite amazing as I think about it now. Rented parents!

"At any rate, I got to keep my little flat in Brompton Square, from which I sashayed out early in the morning to cover the many golfing missions. When my father died two years later I remember my mother showing me what she described as the 'sweetest, strangest letter' she had received from some people called Wilmerding in Texas. "'What good times we all had together in London,'" she said, quoting from the letter. 'What do you suppose they meant by that?'"

ARMED WITH THIS MATERIAL, I telephoned *Late Night* as often as three times a day. As April 1 approached, I continued to say that I was returning Mr. Gannon's calls, which I thought created a proper sense of urgency. Always at the other end they were very polite, and then

came the long wait while they went off looking for him. I imagined them catching a glimpse of a vanishing back and calling after him. "Gannon! Gannon!" Always they came back on the line and said he was out on the floor somewhere.

Once I called and said "This is Gannon. I'm out on the floor somewhere. Can you tell me where?"

I could hear someone breathing at the other end of the line.

"*Late Night*," a voice said tentatively.

I even tried on the morning of April 1. My London friend had called to give me the hoaxes from the morning dailies. The best was from the *Daily Mail*, reporting that Stonehenge was about to be dismantled and moved to a new site. The original plan was to move everything to Snowden, but a Japanese consortium had entered the picture—offering 450 billion yen to move Stonehenge to Mount Fuji!

I thought Mr. Gannon would be amused. But no luck. This time I was told he was in a meeting. It crossed my mind that his staff had finally cornered him in the back of a packing case and was wrestling him into a backstage closet.

I watched the show that night from a hotel room in Chicago. I left a party early to see what Mr. Gannon had preferred to my April Fools' stuff. I turned on the set. Well, no wonder! April 1, a Monday, turned out to be a rerun night! Out-of-date jokes about Cher, Dan Quayle. A very funny comic, Martin Short, came on and there was banter about Letterman's tie (a velvet shibboleth) and the fact that Short wasn't wearing one. The exchanges were quick and lively, like tennis pros volleying with each other at net. Not my sort of pace at all. I tend to cross my legs, lean back, and dawdle. Letterman would have fidgeted during my splendid Arlen material.

Still, why hadn't Mr. Gannon come to the phone to tell me that he'd discovered there wasn't an April Fools' show? So simple. It confirmed my suspicion that he's in trouble out there on the floor somewhere. I've called a few times since. Being a fireworks buff I have some ideas to offer the show on July Fourth. No luck. Can't find him. He's vanished. If you're as worried as I am about Mr. Gannon, call NBC—in New York the number is listed. Or perhaps call the police. ☐

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# Executive Summary

## By Stanley Bing

### Let's Get Empty

**WAKE UP, MAGGOT. SMELL THE COFFEE.** You can even have a cup. Then prepare for the most painful fifteen minutes of your career. You're not going to like it. It's gonna hurt, but we're going to go through our briefcases. And when we're done, you won't have a shred of your collected self left. Look on the bright side. This is going to hurt me a lot worse than it's going to hurt you. I'm going to show you mine. I hasten to add that you're receiving instruction from a guy who once had a spontaneous combustion in the

trunk of his car because it was so jammed with clothing, no laundering would return to a pristine state, periodicals I intended to read and never did, a telephone receiver, six Copco pots, including a very large stew caldron of bright, saucy yellow, even, I think, some food, although certainly no cheese or anything like that. I had my standards, even back then. But having your own car blow up from sheer karmic dissonance? It gave me pause. I can tell you that I believe it just might have been the moment when I finally began the trip down the cleaner, less brambled path that led me into the tree of choices known as a career in business. So I've known squallor, and loved it. I also know the only thing that can be done with too much matter, Antimatter. Literally. The concept that *none of it matters*.

Don't worry. We're not looking for Goebbels's briefcase here. This can be *your* briefcase, reflective of a sane level of personal history. But right now it's not anybody's briefcase, believe me. It's a deep psychic pit weighing down your huge, boundless spirit with yesterday's lunch meat.

And we're not going to get organized either. Any cringing wonk or taut sphincter can get organized.

No, we're going to get *empty*. Think about that: a broad, baking beach with sand so white it's almost pink, a mountainside covered with four feet of packed powder, a night above the tree line in which the stars indeed cannot be counted. And you are there. See pure negative capability where before there was a massive, oozing sump pump of testering obligations? An abyss. A black hole into another universe. See being able to find one damn thing, for a change, when you need it.

You may do one of three things:

- Delegate it to anyone but yourself, since if you were the one who was supposed to do something about it, it wouldn't have festered in your steamer trunk for this long.
- Destroy it by heaving it into the garbage can down the hall from your office. Too many things consigned to a local Dumpster end up retrieved in the darkening hours near 5:00 P.M. when the spirit is weak and nostalgic.
- Take it home and leave it in the big bowl in the kitchen, where somebody else can take necessary action while your back's turned.

**OKAY! ARE WE READY FOR A FRESH START?**

There's a 1989 *Zagat New York City Restaurant Survey*. I go there a lot and need to know what's in, what's out, what's hot, what's not. Although we're not eating out as much as we used to, are we? Who needs to read the words *free-range chicken* one more time? The whole concept is ridiculous: chickens running boldly and joyfully free in the light of the prairie moon? Give me a break.

**Disposition:** Extinction by shredding.

Holy camolie. Here's a *manila folder of medical bills* I was supposed to submit by the end of 1990 if we were to retain the right to receive benefits. *Hmm.*

**Disposition:** Oblivion by transportation to the mail-room trash receptacle.



**He who doesn't throw out his personal history is condemned to tote it around. And it's heavy!**

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## Executive Summary

By Stanley Bing

There's a *book* for my son that has no type in it whatsoever, just pictures of baby farm animals. It's been lost for a long time. I guess the little fellow stuffed it in when I wasn't looking. He was doing that for a while. About two years ago. Could the contents of my magic pouch date back as far as that? Further? He's too old for it now, at any rate.

**Disposition of object:** Death by piling for later destruction.

There're the *current issues* of *PC Week*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *People*, *Captain America*, *Fantastic Four*, *Ghost Rider*, *Byte*, *Publish*, *UNIX Today*, and six or seven industry newsletters whose subscription value together totals more than \$4,900 a year. I have read none of them, although all of them are of immense and incontrovertible value to me as a person and a professional.

**Disposition:** Later destruction! Although, come to think of it, the newsletters should probably be filed, since they're so expensive. I'll give them to Betty. The rest I'll pile for later, vicious disposal.

Uh-huh. Here're my *datebooks* for 1988, 1989, and 1990. What was I supposed to do with these? Save them someplace. Not my desk, I can't find anything in there anyhow but old salutes. This is important stuff. What if I were audited? I don't want to be audited! And I know it! I throw these away, I will be. There's a law about that someplace.

**Disposition:** The big brown bag for spouse action.

Now, look. Here's a *Transition Vamp CD* that was given to me for my thirty-eighth birthday and that I was supposed to return! I'm forty now. That's really weird. I looked all over for this— including in here. Where did it come from?

**Disposition:** *Sneesh*. I don't know. You can't throw out perfectly good med a like this, but it's too late to return it for credit. Hey, Betty's birthday is today. Sure she's over fifty and her favorite singer's Julio Iglesias. But she could use a fresh point of view. Let's see. Do I have any gift wrap in here? Sure I do! Great!

Oh, my God. Here's my *birth certificate*. I must have been carrying it around since we went on that trip to Mexico in 1982. How is that possible? Could it be I simply transferred a wad of undesignated gunk in here at some point for later dispensation? Or is it something more bizarre? If I reach deep enough, will I come out with the re-

mains of my pet bird, Bob, who flew away on my fifth birthday?

**Disposition:** Inside jacket pocket for later delivery to my wife. She'll know what to do with it.

Now, here's the *final draft of the 1992-1995 strategic plan*. The copy the entire corporation was looking for, to no avail, just a month ago. I didn't know I had it. I swear to God! When nobody could find it, an *heli* broke loose. Nobody knew where it was, and we had to call the printer in to fix up another batch overnight, which cost a couple dollars, believe me. I swear on the grave of my dead dog I don't remember ever putting it in here! If anybody knew I had it.

**Disposition:** Placement under the carcass of Betty's birthday cake in the employee lunchroom.

Here are some *pictures of my daughter when she was a baby*, circa 1985. Gee, she was cute. Now she's in third grade.

**Disposition:** Back in the little inside pocket of— NO! NO!—not the briefcase. Somewhere else. Please. Gee. That piece getting kind of noticeable. Never mind. What else is in here?

A *list of things to do* from 1989, two out of six things crossed out.

A *note from Eddy Wysockie*, pleading for consulting work or, at least, a letter of recommendation. No action ever taken.

A *bundle of thank you cards* written by my wife, to be sent to people who gave us gifts on the birth of our second kid in 1988. None of them were ever sent. That's what she gets for giving me something important to put in the mail. I warned her!

Fourteen *invitations to a 1990 industry dinner* honoring some guy I have no idea who he is. I think I was supposed to distribute them at headquarters to anyone who might have been interested. I forgot.

A *stack of pictures of my thirty-ninth birthday party*. I'm passed out on the bathroom floor in them. Maybe that's why I never brought them home. I don't wanna throw them out, though. Wouldn't that, in a sense, be extinguishing myself?

A *note from my wife*, dated 1/90. "Check with our lawyer," it says. I never did.

A *message from Chet*, my chairman, in response to a marketing proposal. "No," it says. "The entire idea makes my face hurt." I was sure I had thrown this thing away. And yet... here it is.

A small bottle of *Keri hand lotion*. I don't use Keri hand lotion. Never have. But here it is. A little has spilled into the inside seam and has sort of been oozing around in there.

Excuse me, but what was my birth certificate doing in here? "Have this notarized and make copies and return all to me," says a note from my wife covering it. I never did and she never asked about it. It just shows, if you don't mind my saying so, that she doesn't follow up on these things as much as she thinks she does!

A small tube of *Blistex*.

How can I possibly throw all this away? I told you this was going to be painful.

Whoa. Here come several more *notes from Chet*, including one covering a *stack of articles* on the deterioration of our industry in the current operating environment. It reads, "Bing, the information contained in this packet poses a serious challenge to our operating assumptions, particularly those based on growth via acquisition. I've got a meeting next week with Arnold and I'd like to have your thoughts on this by then. This is very important, Bud. Get going on it. Thanks. Chet." It's dated 6/15/91.

Godd Lord. I've got about five minutes until close of business to fire something off on this subject! I don't have time to get any more empty! I have work to do! Now I'm going to take the entire pile of questionable stuff I've assembled and—

And put it in my credenza? That's right! The only time you have to clean out your credenza is when you're fired! Which I don't plan to be—with no help from this stupid trash can of old detritus and lost ideas! In fact...

I HATE MY BRIEFCASE!

Wouldn't we all be a lot better off if we didn't carry the stupid things? Sure we would! So I want you to take it right now. I want you to go to the nearest port. And I want you to drop it in. That's right. From here on in, we're going to live like existentialist warriors, arms free, swinging in the wind. We're not going to be burdened with a suitcase of stuff we need to hide or put off until tomorrow! If it doesn't fit on a diskette, we don't need it.

The successful guys are the ones who travel light. Except for attorneys. And you don't want to be one of those, do you? ☐

Now, here's  
the final draft  
of the 1992-1995  
strategic plan.  
I didn't know I  
had it, I swear  
to God!





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There's nothing like the Toyota 4Runner 4WD 4-Door SR5 V6 to expand your playing field. Its advanced 3.0-liter 150-hp engine, shift-on-the-move 4WDemand and rear coil-spring suspension give you the drive to go where your spirit moves you. And the Toyota name gives you the confidence to go with it. What's more, with its roomy luxury interior, optional CD player and extra-large cargo area, you can enjoy the wide-open spaces even when you're back playing in the city. Where you go is your concern. Getting you back is ours. Call 1-800-GO-TOYOTA if you'd like a 4Runner brochure or the location of your nearest dealer.

"I love what you do for me."



# Man At His Best

A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO QUALITY AND STYLE



## Classics The Hangover

BY JOHN BERENDT

**M**Y INTRODUCTION to hangovers came vicariously through a math teacher. His name was Mr. Tatum, but we called him the Prince of Darkness because at least once a week we'd file in for class and find him sitting with the lights out, the shades drawn, and a grim look on his face. Mr. Tatum spoke softly on these mornings so as not to unduly vibrate his skull. He also kept a bottle of something called nux vomica in his desk, and it was the subject of much hilarity. "Don't

knock it," he said. "Someday you may need it." We liked him. Not because he'd been an all-state quarterback or because he drove a red MG and had beautiful women coming to him wherever he went. We liked him because of his hangovers. They confirmed to us that he lived a glamorous, fast-paced private life.

You have to remember that in those days—and I'm speaking of the early 1950s—hangovers were looked upon as an honorable, even heroic, ordeal.

All the best people had them, particularly in the movies. Black tie at night, hangover in the morning. That's the way it went. Even the women had hangovers. Katharine Hepburn in *The Philadelphia Story*, Myrna Loy in *The Thin Man*, Greta Garbo in *Ninotchka*. Hangovers were funny, especially if you had an ice pack on your head, and so was drinking and being drunk. Onscreen drunks were so common in the movies that two actors (Arthur Housman and Jack Norton) were able to make successful careers out of playing nothing but mousmouthed inebriates.

The fact of the matter is that after Repeal, drinking was a novelty for most Americans. Consumption of alcohol had dropped to less than half of what it had been before Prohibition (0.97 gallons per capita as opposed to 2.6), and it didn't get back up to pre-Prohibition levels until 1970. So for several decades we were naive on the subject of liquor. And in those relatively but toned-down years we yearned for the fun-loving 1920s, an era in which, as F. Scott Fitzgerald described it, the hangover became a part of the day as we allowed-for as the Spanish *siesta*.

Consumption of liquor reached a peak in 1981, and so did our appreciation of its dangers. Since then, drinking has steadily declined, partly because of the nationwide health kick but also because of higher legal drinking ages, the campaign to curb drunk driving, and the recent enactment of laws that hold bartenders and

party hosts responsible for the consequences of the drinks they serve. We are now more sophisticated in our drinking habits. Drinking is still cool, but getting sloshed is not.

We do stumble on occasion, however, as I did a few months ago when I woke up feeling

In the 1950s hangovers were an honorable, even heroic, ordeal. All the best people had them.

like Mr. Tatum. I considered taking a stiff drink—the so-called hair-of-the-dog that bit you cure—but I was in a hurry to achieve equilibrium, and that would only have prolonged the process.

I remembered that in the first story of the Jeeves series, Jeeves gives Bertie Wooster a classic hangover remedy, so I consulted the text. Jeeves appears with some brownish muck in a glass. "It is the Worcestershire sauce that gives it its color," he says. "The raw egg makes it nutritious. The red pepper gives it its bite." That concoction might have been okay in 1925, but in 1991 a raw egg can give you *Salmonella* poisoning, not to mention a heavy dose of cholesterol. Sorry, Jeeves.

I next considered a bicarbonate of soda, but only for a moment. W. C. Fields once refused a bicarb on the grounds that the fizz made too



# Man At His Best

much noise. On this particular morning I knew exactly what he meant.

I would have taken aspirin, but I remember reading that a recent test at the Bronx Veterans Medical Center had shown that aspirin inhibits an alcohol-digesting enzyme and therefore actually keeps you drunk longer. So, nix the aspirin. I found a couple of hangover hints in the back of a book on mixed drinks, but "Heat one can of tomato soup with two scoops of vanilla ice cream" was as far as I got.

Finally, I dropped in at my local health food store. The guru-in-residence told me, with just a trace of self-righteousness, that his customers did not normally require hangover antidotes. He did have some suggestions, however: Drink water to counteract dehydration, eat an *umeboshi* plum to restore alkalinity to the digestive tract, take vitamin C to detoxify the blood, take a B supplement to replenish the B vitamins destroyed by alcohol, try evening primrose oil to stimulate prostaglandin activity, drink a glass of green magma (barley juice concentrate) for a general detox, and a quick energy boost.

"You wouldn't happen to have something called nux vomica, would you?" I asked offhandedly.

The man handed me a bottle. The label said nux vomica was a homeopathic remedy made from "poison nut." It was for frontal headaches, vertigo, photophobia, and nausea. I bought it, took some, and immediately felt better. I sent a mental thank-you note to Mr. Tatum, and it occurred to me that it's a good thing he had his hangovers at a time when hangovers gave a man stature. Today we'd think of him as just another poor slob who couldn't hold his liquor. ☐

## Motoring Can You Display the Way to San Jose?

BY PHIL PATTON

**B**EFORE LONG YOUR car contains a computer to guide you to your destination, you'll have Rupert Murdoch to thank. A few years ago, a Silicon Valley start-up called FIAC came out with the Navigator electronic road map. But nobody bought it—except the media magnate. He liked the idea so much, in fact, that he bought the company. What he understood was that while FIAC thought it was in the computer business, it was really in the publishing business. Computer discs are the road maps of the future.

Now FIAC has dropped the Navigator, forging hardware for software. It sells its map discs to folks who know about car electronics: to Blaupunkt, the high-end car-stereo company whose new Travepilot has become the first commercially successful navigator. At \$3,500, plus around \$200 for installation—or about the amount of the luxury tax on a BMW 750iL—the Travepilot, perched there by the cigarette lighter, saves you from wrestling with a road map in unfamiliar territory.

Travepilot's face is a chunky green screen displaying the soft lines of the map, along with compass direction, destination, and distance, and—represented by a neat green V—you and your

Edo. Key in the street address you're aiming for and the brain starts churning information from sensors on the wheels and from a CD-ROM player. But even with a capacity of six hundred megs, the size of an encyclopedia, it's still tough to pack in a road map. That's where the folks at FIAC come in. They figured out how to digitally fold the

whole Northeast, say, onto a disc, while most of us still can't fold up the Rand McNally version of Vermont New Hampshire.

The Travepilot uses the oldest navigation method of all: dead reckoning. From its original, known position, the computer registers changes in direction from the wheels in relation to a compass. Along the way, via a form of artificial intelligence, it looks nervously at the map on the disc. In most cases it will give your spot to within a car's length or two on the interstate.

There are plenty of buttons to monkey with. We like the zoom feature, for enlarging the scale from thirty miles, say, to seven hundred feet. But beware: If you get detoured by construction on the new bypass onto an unmarked logging road, a condition Blaupunkt euphemizes as "extensive interference from infrastructure," you may run right off the edge of the disc.

Future navigators may offer "intelligent routing systems" that will choose the best route, digesting information from stoplight schedules, traffic reports, and, we hope, radar detectors. And while they read CD-ROM, they may also play CDs. We like to imagine a version that works the map and the music in sync. Slide down the merge ramp onto the Santa Monica and Aretha cuts loose with "Freeway of Love." Key in your location, just south of St. Louis, and Roosevelt Sykes keyboards his "Highway 61 Blues." ☐



Key in the street address you're aiming for and the brain starts churning information from sensors on the wheels.

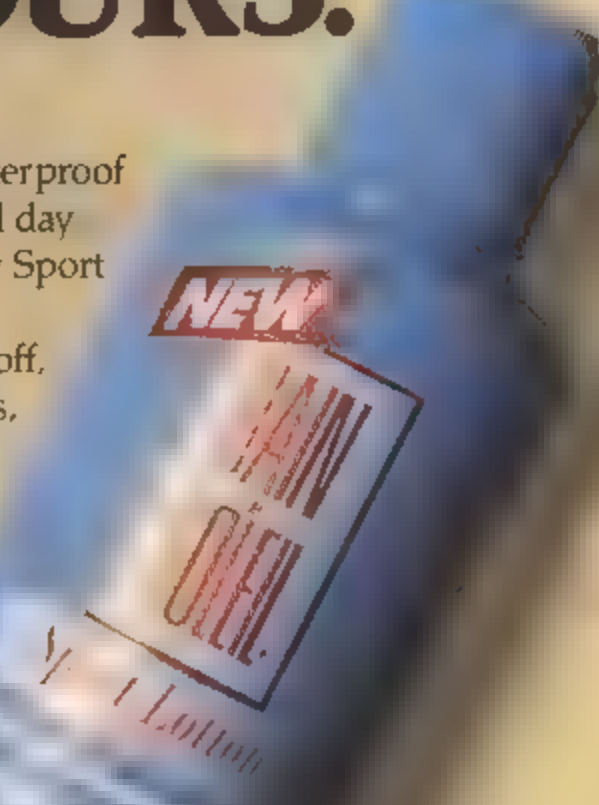
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In SPF's 8 and 15. For great color today, great skin tomorrow.



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or ban the sun





# THE FUTURE IS HERE. IN SIZES 6 TO 15.

What will the future be like?

It will be bright green. And blue. It will be lightweight (Approximately a scant 9.5 ounces.) And it will come in various sizes.

It's the Air Huarache from Nike. A radical new running shoe based on the rather old adage that less is more.

Less stuff. More stability, support and cushioning. The secret lies in the midsole. A unique anatomically-contoured design provides all the stability and support you'll ever need.

But that's not all it does. The midsole design allows the upper to be stripped to the bare essentials without giving up one iota of support or stability.

The upper is made from a combination of neoprene and Lycra fabrics. (FYI: Neoprene is that stuff wetsuits are made from.) It hugs the foot like a second skin, making the fit even more supportive. The result? Less weight. (Again, approximately 9.5 ounces.)

And in case you were wondering, yes, the Air Huarache has Nike-Air cushioning. Both in

the forefoot and the heel. Now, if you think all this technology is only for the Mark Allens of the world, you're wrong.

The future is for everyone. Wherever the Air Huarache running shoe is sold.



Women's Air Huarache



# Man At His Best

Sport

## My Life as a Trend

BY FRED GRAVER

**I**'LL PREFACE THIS story with another story. Last spring, at a large Cineplex in Los Angeles, the guy behind the popcorn counter asked me and I swear this is verbatim:

"Would I be taking anything away from your unique qualities if I said you looked like someone else?"

I assured him he wouldn't, and he told me I looked like James Spader. And then, with my popcorn, he offered this bit of wisdom:

"The thing about this town, man, is you think you have your own thing going, right? And then one day you're walking down the street, right, with your thing? And someone from the industry sees you, and six months later, it's twenty million other people's thing."

Earlier this year, I got caught up in something that I believed, for a brief, shining moment, was my own thing. But I was a fool, just waiting for someone to take something away from my own unique qualities.

Last Christmas my son, Josh, asked for a pair of Rollerblades, those roller skates with one line of wheels on them, built to go fast and look cool as a hell. When we were in the store, I happened to ask the clerk if he had a pair in 10½, and well, go ahead and laugh. Like some of you dads didn't happen to put a few extra Nintendo games under the tree this year—games that, let's face it, were far too difficult for your chad to play.

The very act of trying on the Rollerblades got me hooked. I laced them up, pushed off, and felt a surge of power. The blades glided effortlessly across

the floor. A lot too soon, though, a foot or two from a wall of hockey sticks, I came face-to-face with the great Rollerblade problem: How do you stop? I did a damn good impersonation of Robert De Niro in *Awakenings* (the second half of *Awakenings*, of course, twisting myself wildly until every last particle of kinetic energy had jerked itself through my arms and backside. When it was all over, I stood there, laughing, shaking, and in love

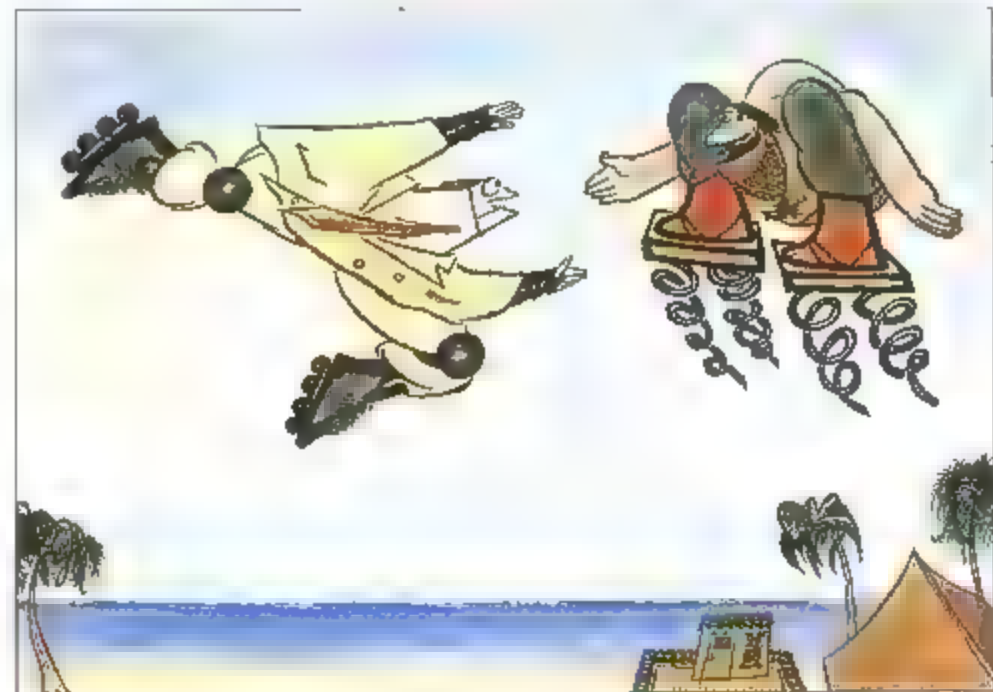
holds four "high-rebound Kryptonite" wheels, the industry nomenclature—a little much, I grant you) in tight suspension.

The whole design is about your foot and those wheels working together, converting energy into motion. One afternoon, as my son and I were doing some high-speed gliding along the esplanade on the East River, he suddenly smiled at me and said, "It's like flying," and he was right.

When I had work to do in California, I brought my blades with me, and at the first opportunity I went to skate on the long sidewalk that travels up the beach from Venice to the Pacific Palisades. I went there not only to skate, but to seek out the company of my fellow

real fast and gets thrown forward onto the ground, we say he bit." But after skating from Venice to the Palisades and back again, after seeing maybe a dozen bladers but nobody in groups of more than two or three, I had given up on finding comrades. In fact, I felt pretty good about it. Maybe I was into something unique.

I was standing in Venice watching two guys juggling knives and torches, they appeared for a brief instant in *L.A. Story*, soon, their thing will be twenty million other people's thing when I finally met a woman who wanted to talk to me about Rollerblading. She wanted to know when I bought my blades, how often I bladed, why I bought Rollerblades



Earlier this year, for a brief, shining moment, Rollerblading was my own thing, man.

What I fell in love with was that the act of skating felt so different from anything I had done before. The Rollerblade is more than a skate, it's a system of encasements that transfers the movement of your legs into rhythm and flow. Your foot is held in a foam-padded nylon liner, which sits inside a molded polyurethane shell. The feel is less that of a skate than of a very comfortable ski boot. The boot is fastened to a glass-reinforced nylon runner that

Rollerbladers. Surely in Venice, I imagined, in that cradle of civilization's permutants, where they have a store that sells nothing but refrigerator magnets, they would have a blading subculture.

There were a few kids trying to develop some really cool Rollerblade tricks; they admitted to me that most of their tricks, and most of their blading lingo, was stolen from skateboarding. "We've got one original word. When a guy falls

instead of "one of the other brands of in-line skate."

And then she pulled out the clipboard. This was no kindred soul. This was the leader of a marketing focus group.

A week later, I found myself in a nondescript building in Marina del Rey with seven other handpicked Rollerbladers. I knew from looking over the shoulder of the clipboard brandishing leader that I was in the Crossblader group—those who perform other aerobic activi-

The Perfect Party.

Tanqueray. A singular experience.





# Man At His Best

ties. There are also Trans-bladers (those who do other skating activities), Social Bladers (those who Rollerblade to meet other people), and Voguers (those who Rollerblade in the vain hope of meeting Madonna), but they were meeting later.

I couldn't help but think to myself: Isn't this what's wrong with America today? Have we so little faith in our own ideas? Isn't the very design of the Rollerblade an eloquent statement of its reason for being? Can you imagine Henry Ford putting a focus group together about the Model T? Can you imagine Henry peering over the statistics, shouting, "Damnation! They want to drive the damn thing!"

I'll spare you the incredibly long evening I spent there. We were told at the outset, "Hey, have fun with this!" That should give you some indication of how it went. The nadir of my experience came when we were asked to write down our ideal "blade run," and the guy next to me read a paragraph about the smooth ride, the precision of the skate, how it was like flying.

Hey! That was my unique experience, man!

The next day I traveled back to Venice to try to wash all of this out of my system, to see if I could still claim a little unique turf for myself. As I was skating down the boardwalk, I spotted a shirtless, bearded man literally bouncing toward me. He had bound his ski-boot-clad feet to two burlap boxes, each containing a set of car-suspension springs. With each step, he rose a foot or two straight into the air.

"It's a new thing," he told me. "I'm looking for investors. Let me ask you: Do you think you're the kind of person who would want to walk on air?"

Who, me? Sure I'm just another sucker for anything unique. **E**

## Dangerous Knowledge How to Cork a Bat

BY JAY STOWE



**Get a bat.** A wood bat. There are three makes to choose from—Hillierich & Bradsby, Adirondack, and Worth—but true Americans will, of course, do the right thing. Pick up an H&B Louisville Slugger. Recommended weight: 32 ounces, recommended length: 35 inches (proportions based on current major-league norms).

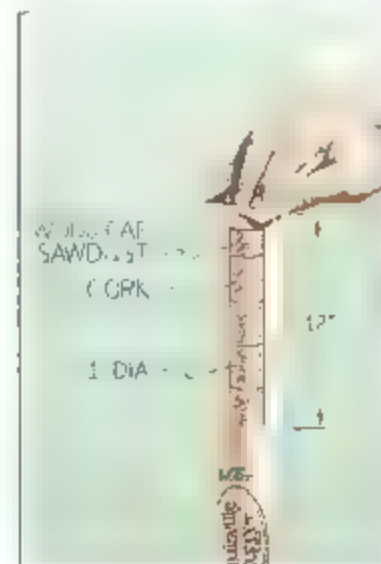


**Glom on to a drill press.** Bore an axial hole, roughly 1-1 1/4 inches in diameter, 6-12 inches in the barrel of said bat. The drill bit and bat must be in perfect harmonic alignment to avoid splinterage. (Note: A 5-inch hole, 1 3/16 inches in diameter, will reduce bat weight by approximately 1 1/2 ounces.) \*

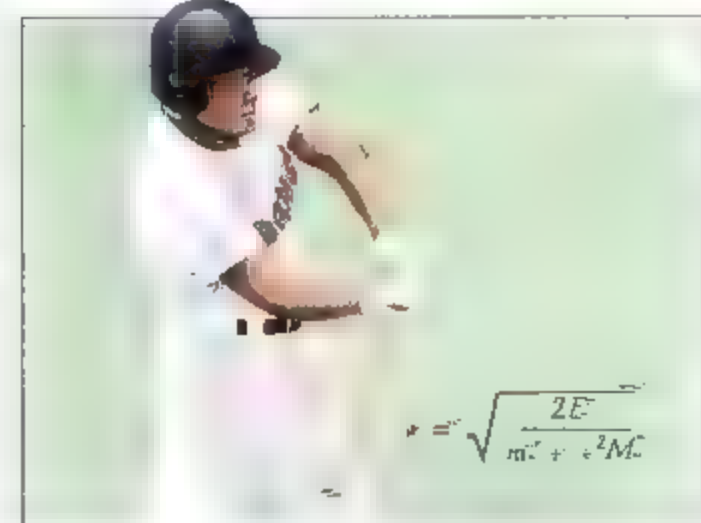
\* Dr. Robert K. Adair in *The Physics of Baseball* © 1990



**Plug that hole.** A variety of substances can be and have been used. Sole criterion: must be lighter than wood. Recommended cork, Styrofoam, sawdust, small tube of mercury. Beware. Rubber balls have been used, but, while lighter than wood, they absorb more energy than they disperse, thus they can take up to two feet off a long hit.



**Cap the plug.** Use a small wood cap or wood putty over about an inch-thick sawdust cushion, and make sure it is the same color as the bat. Sand it down flush with the bat top and camouflage with rosin.



Your new corked bat, officially termed a "freak type of bat" by Official Baseball Rules, is a leaner, meaner piece of lumber, allowing you to swing faster and improve your timing. A simple quadratic mass velocity equation reveals that each ounce lost can give the hitter a 4- to 6-inch swing lead on a fastball. Depending on who you talk to, you will add either 2 feet or 50 feet. Warning: If you talk to a physicist, your hits will get shorter.

Addendum: This is completely illegal.

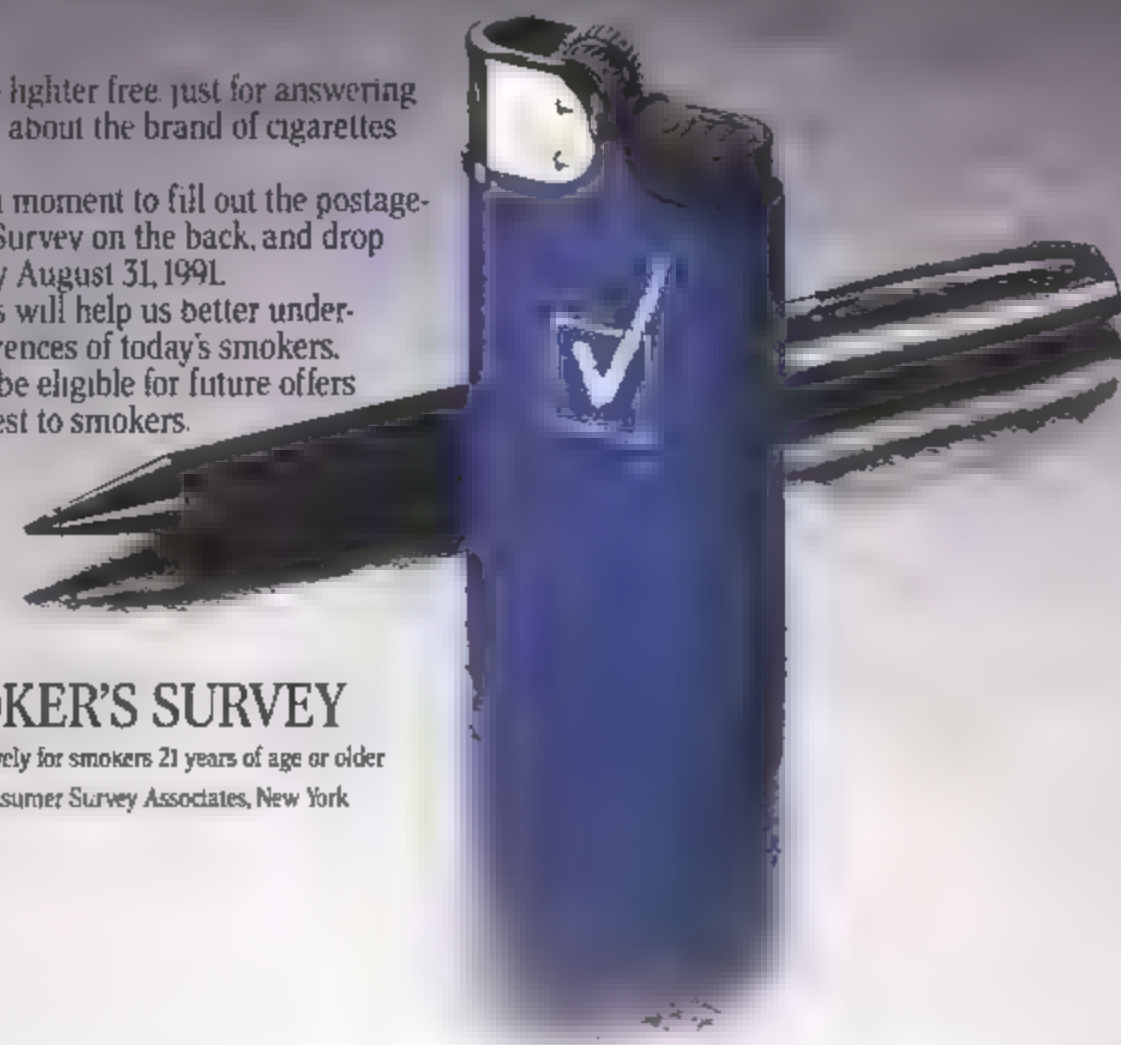
$$v = \sqrt{\frac{2E}{m + \frac{1}{2}M}}$$

# Smokers, here's a free offer worth checking out.

Get this butane lighter free just for answering a few questions about the brand of cigarettes you smoke.

Please take a moment to fill out the postage-paid Smoker's Survey on the back, and drop it in the mail by August 31, 1991.

Your answers will help us better understand the preferences of today's smokers. And you could be eligible for future offers of special interest to smokers.



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## Get a free lighter, just for answering this Smoker's Survey.

**For Smokers Only.** Please complete the following information about yourself, fold, seal and mail by August 31, 1991. To receive your free lighter, be sure to sign where indicated.

**Thank you.**



☐ Mr ☐ Ms ☐ Mrs

First \_\_\_\_\_ MI \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Male ☐ Female

Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

By responding to the following survey and signing below, I certify that I am a cigarette smoker 21 years of age or older. I am also willing to receive free samples of cigarettes and incentive items in the mail, subject to applicable state and federal law.

Signature (required) \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your regular brand of cigarettes—that is, the brand you smoke most often?

(full brand name)

2. About how long have you smoked this brand?

- ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 3 to 5 yrs.  
☐ 1 to 2 yrs. ☐ Over 5 yrs.  
☐ 2 to 3 yrs.

3. Is your regular brand?

(Check one in each column.)

- ☐ Filter ☐ Menthol ☐ Regular/King Size  
☐ Non-Filter ☐ Non-Menthol ☐ Long/100's  
☐ Extra Long/120's

4. Are any of these words on your pack?

(Check one.)

- ☐ Lights/Low Tar/Milds  
☐ Ultra/Light/Low Tar  
☐ Extra Milds/Extra Lights  
☐ None of these words are on my pack.

5. How do you usually buy it?

- ☐ Soft Pack ☐ Box

6. Do you usually buy it by the?

- ☐ Pack ☐ Carton ☐ Both Ways

7. The next time you go to the store, if your regular brand were not available, what would you do?

(Check one.)

- ☐ Go to another store to buy my regular brand.  
☐ Buy another type or length of my regular brand.  
☐ Wait until the store has my regular brand.  
☐ Buy a different brand entirely.

8. Out of the last 10 times you bought cigarettes, how many times did you use money-off coupons?

- ☐ None ☐ 3 to 6 times  
☐ 1 to 2 times ☐ 7 or more times

9. If your regular brand were not available, which of the following brands would you consider buying? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Alpine ☐ Marlboro  
☐ Benson & Hedges ☐ Merit  
☐ Bristol ☐ Newport  
☐ Bucks ☐ Pall Mall  
☐ Cambridge ☐ Parliament  
☐ Camel ☐ Salem  
☐ Carlton ☐ Saratoga  
☐ Doral ☐ Store/Generic  
☐ Kent ☐ Vantage  
☐ Kool ☐ Viceroy  
☐ Other ☐ Virginia Slims  
☐ Winston

(full brand name)

10. How many packs of cigarettes did you smoke in the past month?

(Note: 1 Carton = 10 packs)

Total # Packs \_\_\_\_\_

11. Of these total packs, how many were your regular brand and how many were other brands?

Regular Brand # Packs \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ # Packs \_\_\_\_\_

(full brand name)

Other \_\_\_\_\_ # Packs \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ # Packs \_\_\_\_\_

12. What percent of your cigarettes do you buy at each of the following types of stores?

- Supermarket \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Grocery \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Convenience/Gas \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Drug Store/Pharmacy \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Total = 100%

13. Which of the following do you enjoy on a regular basis? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Dining out ☐ Attend auto racing  
☐ Read books ☐ Movies  
☐ Travel ☐ Do home repair  
☐ Personal computers ☐ Gardening  
☐ Photography ☐ Work on car  
☐ Spectorator sports ☐ Entertain at home  
☐ Go to plays/concerts ☐ Attend cultural/arts events  
☐ Bowling ☐ Tennis  
☐ Golf ☐ Fishing  
☐ Puzzles ☐ Go to bars/nightclubs

**Free Lighter Offer** good until 8/31/91, or while supplies last. Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery. Only manufacturer's warranty applies. Not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, mutilated or postage-due mail. Offer good only in U.S.A. Consumer Survey Associates lighter offers are limited to one per person regardless of the number of surveys completed. Void where otherwise prohibited, taxed or licensed. Offer limited to smokers 21 years of age or older.

51919

# M a n a t H i s B e s t



## Living Quarters Way Cool Breeze

By PHIL PATTON

**E**VERY CHILD WHO grows up in Kansas learns implicitly to fear tornadoes, the dark, dirty funnels that come boring across the plains and drive toothpicks through telephone poles. Perhaps that is why when Mike Coup was three or four, he found a special comfort bouncing a beach ball off the invisible column of air streaming from a neighbor's old Vornado fan, made right there in Wichita, a chubby metal-cowled machine, friendly as an old Nash or a Boeing Stratocruiser.

When Coup grew up, he found himself collecting old Vornadoes. He would paint a few up—he had to have the old paint colors, like Lambert green, specially made up—and sell them to friends. The friends always wanted one more, and so, two years ago, Coup decided to bring the Vornado back. He went to the industrial-design firm of Richard Ten Eyck, which created the original, and it updated the look without losing the original streamlined shape. Last year, sales doubled, you can now find Vornadoes in major department and appliance stores. The new machine looks so cool that it showed up in a futuristic scene from *Total Recall*.

The first Vornadoes, "a product of the mid-twentieth century, the streamlined age,"

the ads told us, are today sought after by collectors of all those toasters, irons, and vacuum cleaners that look as if they were designed in a wind tunnel. Only having a Vornado is like having a wind tunnel itself. The secret of its "super-charged" vortex lies in its cowl shape and the "twin inductor cones," dreamed up—after contemplating the twisters outside, we like to imagine—in the 1930s by a Kansas tinkerer named Ralph Odor, who did not neglect to patent his invention. After the war the product went national, thanks to aircraft welders who, during the war, helped install the Wright Cyclone engines on B-29s over at the Boeing plant. Now unemployed, they turned to creating little aircraft engines for the home, working for a company just called Aircraft Welding—until some genius was struck with the idea of combining vortex with tornado in a trademark.

The new Vornado suggests a jet turbine more than the prop-engine nacelle of the original. And while the old Vornado rode a base like an aquaplane, the new model sits on a meta-snake of a stand, a benevolent cobra that grows

from the power cord, piped to attention. Atop the serpentine body, the head of the machine is faced with an "AirTensity" grille that seems to be unfurling like the cobra's hood.

The Vornado has never acknowledged being a mere "fan" a word the company had always put in disdainful quotation marks. It's an "air-circulation system," coming back because it saves energy. You can keep your AC four degrees warmer, says Coup, as the Vornado swirls the mix, and save enough to very quickly pay for a couple of the machines. There are new models now, including a portable, and there's a new feature, "automatic variable speed," that varies the speed of the fan according to room temperature. The company bills it as the cruise control of air-circulation systems.

For Mike Coup, the presence of a Vornado has always been soothing, working away silently at the edge of sight. "Your peripheral vision," explains Coup, who has read up on these things, "is more sensitive to flicker." We, too, like just looking at the Vornado, the way we enjoy the plash and play of a fountain in the piazza or the flicker of candlelight. In one way, the Vornado takes us forward to the streamlined future that never was. In another, it takes us back to Kansas, its plains and its planes. **E**

The new machine is so cool that it showed up in a futuristic scene in *Total Recall*.





They don't have any idea who killed the nigger. I didn't kill Medgar Evers, but he's sure dead! He ain't coming back.

—BYRON DE LA BECKWITH

# The Haunting of the New South



For nearly thirty years, the killer of civil-rights leader Medgar Evers escaped justice. Now

the rearrest of Byron De La Beckwith raises up the ghosts of racism past.

BY MARYANNE VOLTERS

A Confederate Knight of the Ku Klux Klan, Tylertown, Mississippi, February 1961. (left) Medgar Evers being arrested in Jackson, Mississippi, June 1963, eleven days before his death.



**M**Y FIRST COMMUNICATION FROM Byron De La Beckwith was a postcard from the Hamilton County jail. I had sent him a letter asking for an interview. "You most certainly will hear from me," he wrote in his cramped, furious script, "as soon as my reply works through the bowels of SATAN..." He wanted to make sure I was white, or more precisely, "a Caucasian Christian." His return address: "De La in de dungeon, 601 Walnut, 37402, CSA." The zip code is downtown Chattanooga, Tennessee. CSA is the place where Beckwith believes he lives—the Confederate States of America.

"I'm a Southern Nationalist, yes ma'am Sho'am," he explained. "Jesus Christ and White Folks are coming back in style..."

The D.A. of Hinds County, Mississippi, says that this unreconstructed white supremacist killed civil rights leader Medgar Evers twenty-eight years ago, that Beckwith crouched in the honeysuckle one night and fired a bullet into his back. Beckwith, seventy years old, stooped and banty, says otherwise. He has spent nearly three decades denying the murder while reveling in his sinister celebrity as the prime suspect.

They came for him once again, in December 1990. When the Tennessee sheriffs knocked on his door with a warrant, Beckwith had already shaved and showered. By now, he knew the drill. "I'm ready to go, boys. I'm not guilty," he told them. He joked as they led him away. "You want to search my pockets to see if I've got a bomb?"

The old man's mood had soured by the time he showed up in green jail togs for his hearing in Chattanooga the next day. "How many Jews are among you?" he demanded, peering at the mob of the press. "I see one n-gra man."

Beckwith told the judge that the murder charge was "nonsense, poppycock, and just something to incite the lower forms of life to force and violence against the country-club set." Although for much of his adult life he worked as a fertilizer salesman, Beckwith always considered himself a member of the country-club set. He was, in fact, scion of a faded southern aristocracy. He vowed that he would fight extradition to Mississippi "tooth, nail, and claw."

This was simply a bail hearing. The state of Mississippi wouldn't have to lay out its case until Beckwith was shipped back to Jackson, so there was no reading of the grand jury indictment, no mention of the new evidence that had surfaced, no new witnesses who had drifted back like ghosts from the past.

The judge released him on \$15,000 bail. He was hastily rearrested on a governor's warrant and returned to his cinder block cell. There he is back in familiar territory, ranting and blustering. No one knows whether to laugh at his racist babble or fear again the fear of a Delta summer in the 1960s.

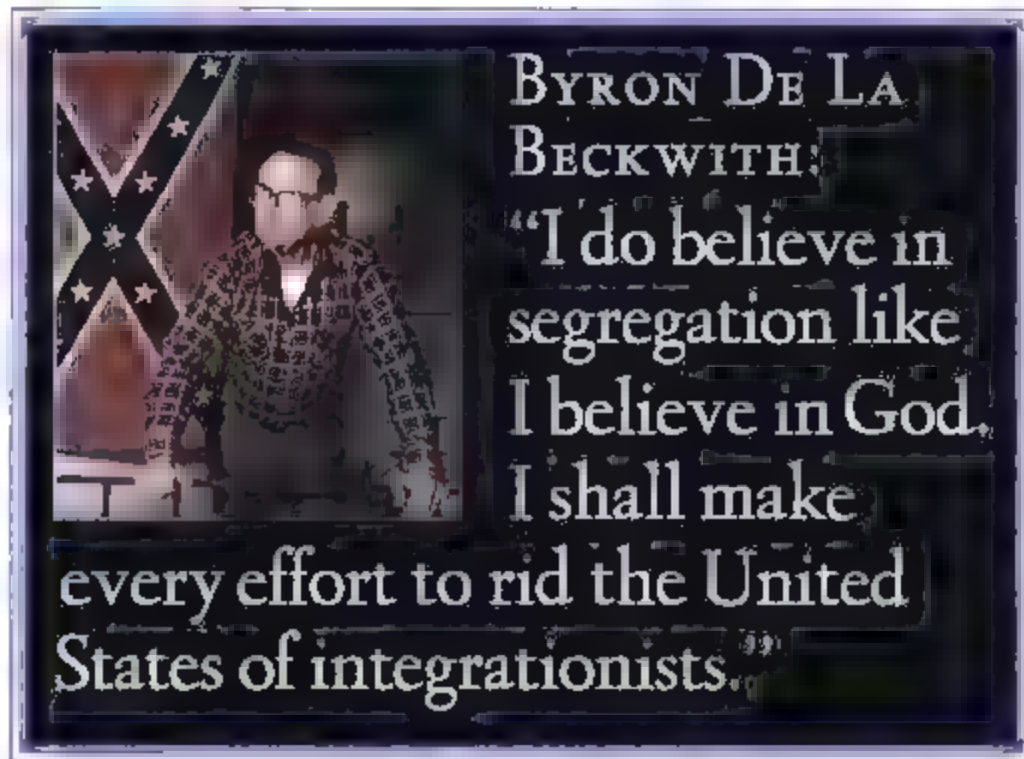
**Y**OU MIGHT SAY BYRON DE LA BECKWITH was a product of his environment. In Mississippi thirty years ago, a man with opinions as colorful as his could blend right into the scenery. The state was a monument to Jim Crow, with separate drinking fountains and restrooms, churches, and schools. But as time passed, the

Deep South started calling itself the New South, and its optimistic leaders have tried to shake off the past like a bad nightmare. But the past doesn't go away, not in Mississippi, where people live long with their memories and their grandfathers'

memories, where the outraged and querulous ghosts of the past still haunt the future.

**B**ECKWITH'S FATHER WAS A PRUNE FARMER from Colusa, California, who married a belle from Greenwood, Mississippi, named Susie Southworth Yerger. The Southworths and the Yergers were old Delta families. Miss Susie's father, Lemuel Yerger, rode with General Nathan Bedford Forrest in the Civil War. Forrest went on to become the first imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Yerger returned to Greenwood, took up law, and started calling himself the Colonel. The family had a ten-thousand-acre plantation outside of town and a rambling wood frame house on George Street.

For all his Confederate roots, Byron De La Beckwith was actu-



ally born in California, in 1920. His father died when Byron was five, and Miss Susie carried him back home to live in the big house with her bachelor brother, Mister Will.

Miss Susie died when Delay, as he was called by then, was twelve, leaving him to be raised by his generous, somewhat addled uncle. The young Delay spent summers on the family plantation, where he was the only white boy, surrounded by servants and farmhands who referred to Will as Master. In the southern tradition, he was packed off to a private school. In 1940 he spent an unimpressive semester at Mississippi State, then joined the Marines after Pearl Harbor. He was wounded in the Battle of Tarawa, and by all accounts he showed an almost unnatural fearlessness under fire. He came home a war hero.

Beckwith married a Wave he met in the service named Mary Louise Williams and bought a little house in Greenwood. They had one child, Byron Jr. Greenwood, the "cotton capital of the world," was a small, sleepy city on the banks of the Yazoo River. It was a community of sharecroppers and millionaires. But the Beckwith family fortune seemed to have dissipated over the years, along with the bloodlines. Beckwith joined the town's small but growing middle class. He took a job with the New Deal Tobacco Company distributing cigarettes and snuff to one-room country stores up and down the Delta.

It is tempting to imagine Beckwith in the early Fifties, tooling along the arrow-straight back roads in the company car and pass-

ing in the dust, unaware, another World War II veteran and traveling salesman—Medgar Evers.

Evers was a native of Decatur, Mississippi, the son of a small hold farmer and a housekeeper. He used the GI Bill to graduate from all-black Alcorn College as a business-administration major. In 1951 he married a beauty from Vicksburg named Myrlie Beasley and moved to Mound Bayou, north of Greenwood, to sell insurance. The staggering poverty and hopelessness of his sharecropper clients politicized Evers, and in 1952 he started working for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

For both men, 1954 was a turning point. Evers became the first black to apply to the University of Mississippi law school (Ole Miss rejected him, of course). And on May 17—"Black Monday" to the good ol' boys—the Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. The white supremacists who ruled Mississippi saw the beginning of the end of their way of life. They lashed out like cornered animals.

Tom Brady, a racist judge from south Mississippi, gave a speech to the Sons of the American Revolution in Greenwood a few days after the court ruling. A rapt Byron De La Beckwith sat in the audience while Brady ranted about the horrors of race mixing, comparing blacks unfavorably with chimpanzees, and warning that Washington was provoking the South into a conflagration.

Beckwith turned rabid on the race issue after that speech. He joined the newly formed White Citizens' Council, a statewide network dedicated to preserving segregation. He collared passersby on street corners in Greenwood, where he pressed anti-integration leaflets on them. He quit the Episcopal church because the rector was too liberal for him (Beckwith reportedly toted a pistol to church in case any blacks tried to attend). And he began his lifelong letter-writing campaign to promote his point of view. "I do believe in segregation like I believe in God," he wrote to the *Jackson Daily News* in 1957. "I shall make every effort to rid the U.S. of integrationists."

Beckwith developed a reputation as a town oddball. People remember his white tropical suits and the black Bible he clutched to his breast. Sometimes they glimpsed a pistol in a shoulder holster when the breeze blew his jacket open. Beckwith's hobby was trading guns, and he kept a large collection. Every Sunday afternoon he went out to the rifle range next to the VFW hall for target practice. One local sharpshooter said Beckwith could shoot a penny matchbox off a fence post at 125 yards with open sights.

"He looked like a little timid bookkeeper with Co-Cola glasses," the man said. "But he wasn't anything like he looked. He was a crack shot, and he had a streak of iron in him."

The story goes, one night Beckwith challenged an FBI agent to a duel with pistols right in front of the dinner crowd at the Crystal Cafe in Greenwood. It seems somebody had been slipping live rattlesnakes into unmarked government cars, and one agent stormed into the restaurant and accused Beckwith of the deed. According to one eyewitness, Beckwith hissed, "You son of a bitch! Let's see who's meanest." They stepped outside, but Beckwith may have smelled a setup, and the duel never took place.

As much as he hated outsiders, the stropky little ex-Marine was all syrup to his white neighbors. He greeted them with exaggerated southern courtliness. "Top o' the mornin'," he would drawl, doffing his hat to women on the street.

Life was not as sugary at home. Mary Louise, a big, dark haired woman who was said to be as bigoted as her husband, divorced Beckwith in 1960. In her complaint she accused him of beating her and threatening to kill her if she told anyone.

The couple remarried on Valentine's Day 1961, only to divorce again a year later. She won custody of their teenage son.

Around that time the New Deal Tobacco Company went belly-up, and Beckwith took a job selling fertilizer products.

By the spring of 1963, the year of the murder, Byron De La Beckwith was forty-two years old and living alone in the crumbling shell of his old family house on George Street in Greenwood. The front windows were raped over with cardboard. Beckwith slept on an army cot in a drafty first-floor room illuminated by a single dangling bulb. Times were bad for all white supremacists in Mississippi. The federals were marching in like Grant's army, trampling all over states' rights, and somehow it seemed like the nigras were to blame.

**I**T HAPPENED ON JUNE 12, 1963, ON A MOONLIT night in the middle of a late-spring heat wave. Just before 12:30 A.M., Medgar Evers arrived home from a night of NAACP meetings. He pulled his pale-blue Oldsmobile into the driveway of his ranch-style house on Guynes Street and parked behind his wife's station wagon.

At thirty-seven, Evers served as the field secretary of the Mississippi NAACP, the state's largest civil-rights group. In those days, civil-rights organizers were about as popular in the rural counties as anthrax. A man caught talking to someone like Evers could lose his job, his house, maybe his life. But that spring, the NAACP started a bold new campaign of demonstrations and boycotts to end segregation in Jackson. Evers was the front man, the undisputed leader who had the courage to demand and get equal time on local television to promote his views. The city, everyone agreed, was primed for an explosion. To the white supremacists, Evers was, at that moment, the most dangerous man in Mississippi.

That night Myrlie Evers had allowed her three small children to wait up for their father. They had all watched President Kennedy's speech on television, where he described a moral crisis in the country, and vowed to end segregation with a new civil-rights bill. The family was half-dozing in the master bedroom when the children heard the familiar crackle of tires on the drive.

The assassin had cleared out a nest in a honeysuckle thicket across the street from the Everses' front door.

Evers wore a white shirt that night, and it must have glowed like a beacon in the cross hairs of the sniper's scope as he climbed out of the car. He picked up an armload of paper work and NAACP T-shirts, then slammed the car door shut.

The bullet smashed into Evers's back just below the right shoulder blade. The slug tore through him, through a window and a kitchen wall before it ricocheted off the refrigerator and landed on a counter.

Myrlie Evers ran to the front door and found her husband sprawled facedown, one arm stretched out, his fingers still clutching the house keys. Medgar had dragged himself around her car, leaving a jagged trail of blood. The kids ran out screaming, "Daddy! Get up!" and a neighbor fired a shotgun blast in the air to scare off the gunman. Someone ran to get a mattress to carry Medgar to the hospital. Myrlie, who was thirty years old and strong, clawed through the crowd to climb into the station wagon with him, but her neighbors held her back.

Medgar Evers came awake during that ride to the hospital. The last thing he said before he died was, "Turn me loose."

Evers had become the first of the Sixties martyrs. In Jackson, the night after Evers was killed, fiction writer Eudora Welty sat at her desk and tried to fathom the mind of the killer. She wrote a short story from his point of view, called "Where Is the Voice Coming From?" "I thought," she later wrote, "whoever the murderer is, I know him, not his identity, but his coming about in this time and place." As it turned out, Welty had the suspect dead to rights in every way but his name.



**H**IS NAME, OF COURSE, WAS BYRON DE La Beckwith, and he was captured after an Enfield 30.06 rifle bearing his fingerprint was found two hundred feet from where Evers fell. He was held without bail, but a sympathetic jailer allowed him to keep part of his gun collection with him in an open cell until he was moved to Jackson to stand trial. The White Citizens' Council provided a lawyer, and \$16,000 was raised for his defense.

Nobody expected a conviction. No white man had been found guilty of killing a black in living memory. Not when fourteen-year-old Emmett Till was lynched for talking fresh to a white woman, not when civil rights worker Lamar Smith was gunned down in front of a whole town. "A white man got more time for killing a rabbit out of season than for killing a Negro in Mississippi," recalled Sam Bailey, a friend of Evers's from the NAACP.

Myrlie Evers thought the trial was a sham staged for the press. But she agreed to cooperate with the prosecutor, an ambitious young district attorney named William Waller, who would later become governor of Mississippi. Waller kicked things off with a question for the jury pool: "Do you believe it's a crime for a white man to kill a nigger in Mississippi?" It took four days to find twelve white men who said they did.

The trial began on January 27, 1964. People who were there will tell you how much Beckwith seemed to enjoy his new celebrity. He lounged at the defense table in his flashy suits and red tie-and-sock combinations. He smiled and waved to the spectators. When Myrlie Evers was on the stand, Mississippi's governor, Ross Barnett, breezed into the courtroom and shook Beckwith's hand in front of the jury, then clapped him on the back.

To everyone's astonishment, Waller actually tried to send Beckwith to the gallows. He had a strong circumstantial case. Two cabdrivers in Jackson testified that Beckwith had asked them for directions to "the nigger Medgar Evers's" house a few days before the killing. A carhop at Joe's Drive-In said she saw Beckwith's white Valiant parked in the shadows near the vacant lot on the night of the murder. A half-moon bruise over Beckwith's right eye at the time of his arrest could have been caused by the kick of a rifle and scope. Thorn McIntire, a young farmer from the Greenwood area, testified he had traded an Enfield rifle identical to the murder weapon to Byron De La Beckwith. A tackle shop owner named Duck Goza swore he had traded Beckwith a Golden Hawk scope one month before the killing. And according to one expert, Beckwith's fingerprint was probably no more than twelve hours old when it was lifted from the scope.

Waller also established a motive through Beckwith's fanatic paper trail. In a letter to the National Rifle Association five months before the murder, Beckwith wrote, "Gentlemen: For the next fifteen years, we in Mississippi are going to have to do a lot of shooting to protect our wives, children, and ourselves from bad niggers." Just before his trial, he wrote to a sporting magazine suggesting an article on "shooting at night in the summertime for varmints."

When Beckwith took the stand, he was cocky and confident. He answered questions with an odd military precision. "Were you in Jackson on the night of the murder?" "No, *sub!*" Did you shoot Medgar Evers? "No, *sub!*" Waller handed him the murder weapon and asked if it was his. Beckwith examined the rifle and sighted it over the jurors' heads. He once had a similar rifle, he said, but it was stolen from his house two days before the killing.

Waller's case derailed when Beckwith's lawyers produced surprise witnesses who swore they saw the defendant in Greenwood, ninety-six miles from Evers's house, around the time of the murder. Two of the witnesses were white policemen.

The jury was out for nearly eleven hours and came back hopelessly deadlocked, an even split of 6-6. The case was retried the

following April. Just before the trial, the Ku Klux Klan burned crosses in Jackson. That time the jury voted 8-4 for acquittal.

Beckwith was released after the second mistrial. The night he returned to Greenwood, crowds lined the streets waving rebel flags. A banner across the highway said WELCOME HOME DELAY. His job with the fertilizer company was waiting for him.

Now that he was famous, Beckwith decided to go into politics. He ran for lieutenant governor in 1967, coming in fifth in a field of six with thirty-five thousand votes. His notoriety made him a sought-after speaker at Ku Klux Klan meetings and church picnics. Then, in 1973, he was arrested in Louisiana with a car full of weapons. Police said he was carrying a ticking time bomb and a map to the home of a Jewish leader in New Orleans. Beckwith said he was framed, but nonetheless served five years in Angola prison for illegal possession of dynamite.

He later resurfaced in Chattanooga, and in 1983 he married his second wife, Thelma Neff, a retired nurse and longtime right-wing activist. The couple set up housekeeping in the man's little bungalow on a mountain overlooking the city. Beckwith hung a full-size Confederate battle flag across the front porch, and he retreated to his office to correspond with his fanatic soul mates of the radical Right and to work on his memoirs. By the decade's end, Delay Beckwith seemed headed for an obscure and peaceful demise, unaware of the old ghosts stirring back home in Mississippi.

**M**YRLIE EVERS LEFT MISSISSIPPI IN 1964. The memories in the house on Guynes Street "became unbearable." Every morning she had to look at the dent in the refrigerator and the shattered counter top. The blood on the carpet never quite washed off. With a stipend from the national NAACP office, she moved her family to Claremont, California, where she knew no one.

"I chose California because Medgar said that if we ever left Mississippi, that's where we'd live," she recalled.

She earned a degree in sociology at Pomona College in 1968 and went on to a job as an ARCO executive. In 1987 Mayor Tom Bradley named her one of five Los Angeles public works commissioners, a plum political appointment that came with a work force of six thousand and a half-billion-dollar budget.

Myrlie Evers agreed to meet me in her third-floor office in the L.A. city hall. She was deliberately vague about where she lived—"just say a house in Los Angeles." She has fallen back on old habits, like checking the rearview mirror for cars that might be following and noticing strangers on the street.

After the murder she slept with a loaded gun by her bed. Even after she moved to California she would sometimes hear a car in her sleep and bolt awake, groping at the nightstand for her pistol until she realized she was no longer in Mississippi. Now that the case has come back, so has her warmth. "Sometimes I can't believe it," she said. "It's like I'm right back where I started."

Evers speaks with a rich, musical voice. At fifty-eight, she is still a beautiful woman, with chin-length hair worn straight and swept under, the way she wore it when she was married to Medgar Evers. She is a warm person, she laughs easily, but she radiates a formal dignity. Even old acquaintances can't bring themselves to call her Myrlie; they call her Mrs. Evers.

The three children she raised alone are grown now. Darrell, thirty-seven, is an artist. Reena, thirty-six, works for an airline, and Van, who was three when his father died, is now a photographer. Myrlie Evers remarried in 1976, to a longshoreman and social activist named Walter Williams, whom she calls "my best friend, my Rock of Gibraltar." But she is still Mrs. Medgar Evers. Her marriage is like a partnership of sorts: Walter, Myrlie, and

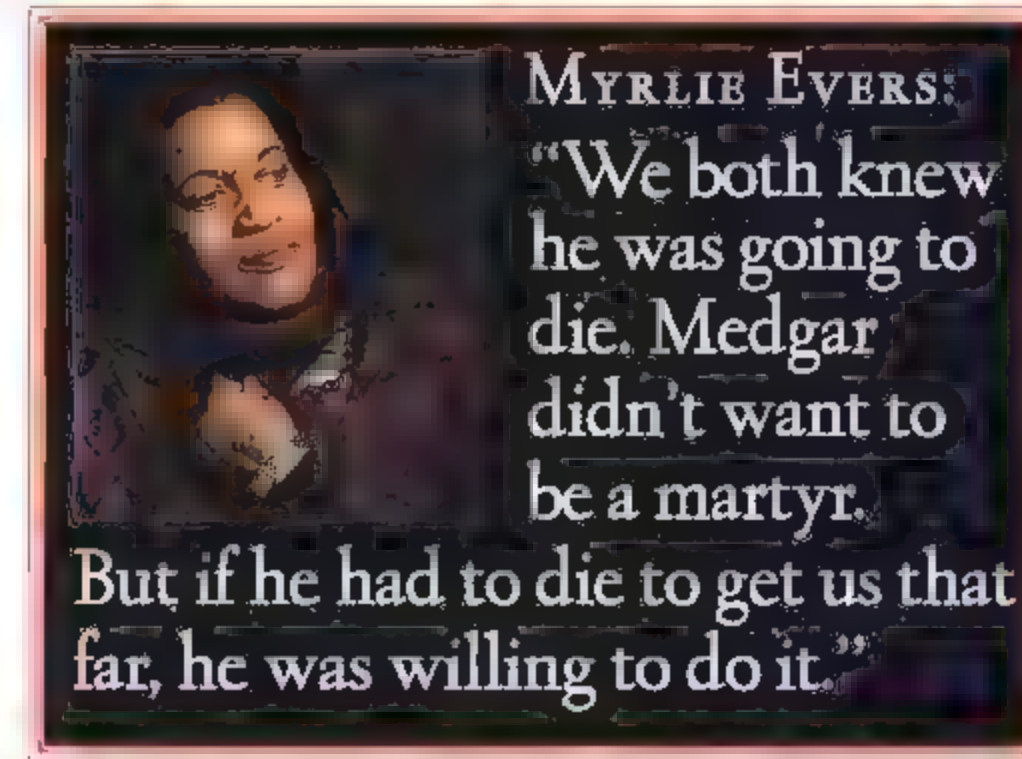
Medgar's ghost.

"Not a day passes that Medgar is not in my thoughts," she said. "It's that driving spirit of Medgar's that's kept me going all these years, made me reach for higher and higher things."

Evers taught her to stand up for herself. She is, she admits, his creation. "All I wanted was a normal life," she said. "But I knew from the beginning that Medgar was quite different."

In 1954, when Evers was promoted to NAACP field secretary, the family moved to Jackson. The first thing Medgar did was buy a car with a V-8 engine to outrun the night riders who prowled the back roads looking for "race agitators." The Everses' lives became a nightmare of midnight phone calls and death threats.

Three weeks before Evers was killed, someone threw a fire bomb at the house on Guynes Street. Myrlie, alone with the kids, put out the blaze with a garden hose. About that time, the



NAACP earned from a sympathetic lawyer who represented a Klansman that Evers and several others were on a Klan hit list.

"We both knew he was going to die," said Myrlie Evers. "Medgar didn't want to be a martyr. But if he had to die to get us that far, he was willing to do it."

Evers's death galvanized the movement. On the afternoon after the murder, hundreds of demonstrators marched through Jackson, were stopped by police, clubbed, and arrested. But something had changed. People who lived through those days will tell you that something shifted in their hearts after Medgar Evers died, something that put them beyond fear. A riot nearly broke out at a funeral procession in Jackson that week. "I remember looking back at thousands of people, masses of young people running in the streets," Myrlie Evers recalled. "At that point a new motto was born: After Medgar, no more fear."

As the years passed, Evers kept open lines of communication with old friends and a lies in Mississippi. She waited with her memories, still, as a coiled cat, for the times to change, for some new evidence to surface that would finally resolve the murder.

"I never gave up hope that something would happen to reopen the case," she said. "People would tell me, 'Forget it, Myrlie, it's too old, nothing is going to happen.' But I had to know, in my own heart, that I had done everything I could. I guess in that lies my salvation."

In October 1989 she found her opening.

It began with a phone call from a Jackson *Clarion Ledger* reporter named Jerry Mitchell. He wanted her reaction to a story about the murder case. Mitchell had been leaked secret files from Mississippi's now defunct Sovereignty Commission, a state agency that was formed in the Fifties to fight integration. Among other things, it harassed and spied on civil rights activists. The files showed that the commission had screened potential jurors in Beckwith's second trial to weed out Jews and liberals.

If the jury had been tampered with, it might be reason to reopen the case. Myrlie Evers flew to Jackson to meet with the Hinds County D.A., Ed Peters. The meeting was chilly. She did not trust this white prosecutor any more than she had trusted Bill Waller back in 1963.

The silver-haired D.A. showed Evers a few sheets of paper in a file folder. That was all that was left of the original investigation—part of the Jackson police report. The murder weapon was missing from the evidence vault, nobody could locate the court records, and they had no transcript of either trial.

"Mr. Peters proceeded to tell me why the case could not be opened," Evers recalled. "I listened patiently, then I told him I wanted to hear what would be done to reopen the case."

Myrlie Evers barely noticed the assistant D.A. who sat next to Peters. Bobby DeLaughter said little during this first meeting. He was expecting to hear an emotional, politically driven appeal to try Beckwith at any cost. It wasn't like that at all.

"Mrs. Evers was a well-spoken, very intelligent, very dignified lady," DeLaughter recalled. "She had a genuine, sincere desire to see justice done, but only if it could be done." DeLaughter projects the earnestness of a kid who decided to become a prosecutor when he was in the ninth grade and has carried a briefcase ever since. Crime, he says, is his hobby as well as profession. His idea of weekend recreation is diving for evidence in the Pearl River.

Now thirty-seven, he grew up in Jackson's white middle class and was one of the first to graduate from an integrated public high school. DeLaughter

said he never heard the name Medgar Evers when he was growing up, or even when he studied at Ole Miss. But like every native son, DeLaughter is bound to the past, through relationships if not memory. The prosecutor's ex-wife, for example, is the daughter of a late Hinds County judge who once swore he would go to jail before he would allow Ole Miss to accept black students.

As the clamor grew for a new indictment, Ed Peters had audaciously dropped the investigation in DeLaughter's lap.

To DeLaughter, the case wasn't about politics, or ghosts, or revenge. It was "a cold-blooded, sniper-ambush assassination," he said. "And there's no statute of limitations on murder." The more he learned about it, the more the case mesmerized him.

He felt offended that a state agency like the Sovereignty Commission would try to undermine a prosecution. "I know how furious I would be if it happened to me," he said. As it turned out, there was no hard evidence of jury-tampering. If the case were to be reopened, DeLaughter would need something different.

He made a point of calling Myrlie Evers every week or so to fill her in on his progress. Gradually the two grew to respect each other, calling back and forth at all hours with new leads. When she realized DeLaughter was serious, Myrlie Evers turned over a transcript of the first trial that she had kept locked up for nearly three decades. Piece by piece, other evidence began to surface.

"I don't want to appear to wear my religion," said DeLaughter,

(continued on page 120)



# SLEEPING

FROM ROME IN THE '50S TO NEW YORK IN THE '90S, A SEXUAL MEMOIR WITHOUT REGRETS

# AROUND

BY ANONYMOUS

**T**HIS WAS AT A PARTY IN DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN some years ago. I had run into Katy—for reasons that will be binding your ear, some identities will be hidden in what follows—who's skinny, funny, a bit of a trapeze artist in the mood-swing department. We used to go out. I was leaving and offered to drop her off on my way home.

Outside her building, Katy asked if I wanted to come up for a drink. It was late, and I was tired. I said thanks, but no.

"That's where it's nowadays," Katy said airily. "Nobody wants to fuck models anymore!"

Alas, of course—there had been nothing suggestive about her invitation—but a rather pointed one. Female models often do protect themselves from the legion of jerks with a human wall of makeup artists, photographers, and male models. Many of Katy's dearest friends were gay or bi—she had been particularly close to the fashion illustrator Antonio Lopez. I had sometimes dined with Katy and members of her gang. Had she slept with any of them? I never got around to asking.

Would I want to know now? Antonio was dead of AIDS. You bet I would. Am I overreacting? Some are, rather, *bold*.

Frank Roccio, say. Roccio was born in the Bronx, but since then has been around. Thoroughly engaged in the '60s—"I was married in San Francisco wearing black Vietcong pajamas. Tim Leary blessed our baby"—he went into the club business. The Peppermint Lounge. Now Roccio believes he has the perfect club formula for this decade.

"The cocktail waitresses will wear Calvin Klein shorts for men and training bras," he said. That, in fact, had been one of his very first creative decisions about the place. "It's going to be like a Playboy Club for the '90s," he exulted. "I always wanted to run a sex club."

Well, I have a healthy interest in underwear, but a sex club? For the '90s?

"Yeah, sure!" Roccio told me. "Paranoia about AIDS is over."

Actually, it's Roccio's project that is over for the moment, stalled at the liquor license level, but what about his basic

premise? The paranoia to which he refers is the heterosexual fear of the virus. When the dark dimensions of the plague were first being brought home to us, I was among those who assumed it would soon shift massively into the straight world, where, of course, it rages in many African countries.

A few years back this shift seemed well under way, at least according to that reliable indicator of social neurosis, gossip. Isabelle Adjani, the French actress, found it necessary to go on national TV to deny that she had the disease. The ear of Luchino, a photographer and cousin to the queen, was so eagerly gripped by the same rumor—it made the front pages of the British tabs—that he, too, took to video for his rebuttal.

This is easy stuff to decide. Mlle. Adjani was the romantic of Warren Beatty. Patrick Luchino had also been a famous ladies' man. So AIDS was no longer just the wrath of God on homosexuals and junkies. It was a sign that the divine forbearance was being withheld from just about anybody who was enjoying a fuller and more colorful sex life than oneself.

Well, since my chat with Katy, several people with whom I had been friendly, or whose paths I had often crossed, have died of AIDS. I scribbled a list before settling down to push off this memoir and quickly got it into double figures. Two of them are women—and none, of them, so far as I know—but how far can one know? I got the disease from heterosexual love-making, but so what? The incubation period remains hazy: seven years? ten? more?—and what we are dealing with is a *virus*, not the secret weapon of some punitive, Bible-thumping right-to-deathers. Body fluids are body fluids—yours, mine, and the Reverend Donald Wildmon's. Whom we choose to exchange them with, or how, seems to be less important than how often. So as a hetero I have to be grudgingly grateful to those women who wouldn't let me exchange mine with theirs nearly as often as I wanted.

What we are doing these days, really, is waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Things *have* changed. I remember when the sexual revolution was going to change the world. I mean, for the *better*.





# SLEEPING AROUND

THE WORDS OF POET PHILIP LARKIN *Sexual intercourse began! In nineteen sixty-three—* carry a particularly high ironic charge for those who, like myself, finished ten years of all male schooling in the '50s. Regardless of folklore about homoeroticism in Britain's private-school system, I had during that time been neither a fondler nor a fondlee. Indeed, I was woefully ill-informed and was reduced to covert studies of *Gray's Anatomy*, "naturalist" publications, and lingerie ads in fashion magazines.

The traditionally awkward soirees that followed, with au pairs, debutantes, or that then-ubiquitous species, the Chelsea Girl (white lipstick, black stockings), would all too often bear Larkin out. The poet, though, was a crotchety, provincial Brit, so he cannot be blamed for being unaware of some of the dress rehearsals for swinging London. In particular, the Rome of *la dolce vita*, and it was here, during the last years of the '50s, that I was taken for the first time to an authentic orgy.

The women were good-natured professionals, and relaxed. The men were anything but. They scampered from room to room, covering their genitals and grimacing if a bare foot touched the marble floor (Rome can be brutal & cold). It registered on me, youthful though I was, that so far as decadence went, these were novices.

It was certainly rock 'n' roll, though, that brought the whole thing mass-market, and it occurs to me that there are huge numbers of people who have only blurry ideas as to what the sexual revolution actually was, now that the Summer of Love has joined the New Woman as ancient history. (This was brought home to me dolefully when I was going through an exhibition given by the Costume Institute of New York's Metropolitan Museum and found myself looking through glass at items of clothing just like pieces still hanging in my wardrobe.)

Actually, even at the time, the sexual revolution was perhaps more read about than revealed. According to David Frost—and some readers will only have a blurry notion who he is—a poll showed that most Britons agreed, yes, there *had* been a sexual revolution in their lifetime, but regretted that somehow or other they had missed it. Sad, that. Or—a bleak AIDS note—perhaps they are now delighted?

But it *did* happen. There was a time when sex was considered a revolutionary force, like drugs and rock 'n' roll. Paths to a new age. And people believed that! A whole generation had suddenly popped up from under a zillion gooseberry bushes, pearly pure, post-Pill, and preperfection. I never believed in the perfection, but it seemed more promising than the way things had been before, and I believed in the belief.

Of course, the participants were into carnal pleasure, but they were churchy about it. Gurus included the likes of Wilhelm Reich, the author of *The Function of the Orgasm* who was drummed out of orthodox Freudian circles because of his belief in "orgone energy," and an army of moist-eyed, bearded shrinks who had boned up on tantric wisdom, rubber-jointed ways to Do It, basically, and the tyranny of the family structure. Momma says No! There was also a distressing humorlessness among many of the purveyors of a better life through sex, and I have dire memories of avant-garde performances where you were like v to find some naked performer bearing down on you with a beatific, self-righteous grin, either to embrace you or to belabor a slogan in your face. I was in a London auditorium when the Living Theater declaimed, "I cannot smoke marijuana." It seemed that half the audience promptly lit up.

There was often some humor to be found in the clash be-

tween the new evangelicals and the forces of reaction. One night at *Oh, Calcutta!*, for instance. *Oh, Calcutta!* was the brainchild of London theater critic Ken Tynan, who was very much in the revolutionary vanguard. *Oh, Calcutta!* was itself a cheerful & vulgar show. It got its name from a French tag, *Oh, quel cul t'as!*, meaning "Wow! What an arse you have!"

Anyway, this particular evening a noisy group was sitting in the front row, waiting for the show to start. It began with the actors and actresses stalking out downstage, clothed. There was sexual badinage until the small, all-male group of spectators in the front row could contain themselves no longer.

"Go on, square!" one boomed at an actor. "Get on with it!" "Take her knickers off!" another yelled.

They giggled and spluttered like drunken, overage schoolboys. Sexual pranks in the London theater to date had been those farces where only the language was risqué and the actress playing the French maid would show off her black frilies, even flash a garter belt, but that was that.

The rest of the audience was pretending to ignore the hecklers, or looking po-faced with disapproval. A few went "Ssssh!" The troublemakers didn't care.

"Show us your tits!" the first wag suggested. "Rip your knickers off!"

The actress showed us her tits. She calmly took her knickers off. The entire troupe did likewise. It was all rather solemn.

The rowdies felt deathly quiet. Pantomime fashion, their jaws actually gaped. We, the all-so-knowing audience, watched the performance get under way with (slightly self-congratulatory, perhaps) approval, but the group in the front row looked—well, frankly, they looked *shocked*.

As the movement plunged on, it became important for individuals—especially those in favor but with reservations, fellow travelers like myself—to determine just how open to experience one really was. Or wanted to become.

So I got out there. And soon decided we were living in fortunate times. I have seen no reason to change my mind. The multiple foibles were the products of a real, wild hopefulness. Computers were going to solve everything, not just screw up your bank account. We were going out into "space," not to a cold, dead boulder floating in our own solar backyard. It was the last period of shared optimism that I expect to see in my lifetime. The sexual revolution was a part of it all. Because of what it turned into, people forgot this.

But grubbiness, deceit, and manipulation had not been exterminated. On the contrary, serpents thrived in the new Eden. I daresay a Charles Manson might do well anytime, but the addle-headedness of that time in particular suited him to a tee. Drugs had a lot to do with the contamination. I vividly remember the first time I had LSD administered to me. It was at a party in a room that stank of joss sticks, with amebas of colored light sliding over the ceiling, and with some awful music, no doubt the Incredible String Band. The dose was given without my knowledge by a close friend, who perhaps hoped to enlighten me and certainly hoped to make out with the woman I was with, which soon—or possibly some hours later—he was doing right in front of me.

I expect that I was supposed to be moved by thoughts of universal love. Actual & insofar as I was able to assemble a train of thought at all, I was moved by a very non-'60s urge to push his teeth down his gullet, but the wretched drug had turned me into something with the sinew of a rotting fig.





# SLEEPING AROUND

There were wry moments among the recklessness. I remember walking down the King's Road, London, one spring day in the '60s, a time when the King's Road was the only place to be. I was carrying a couple of just-out magazines and wearing a just-collected jacket from Dandé Fashions (the Beatles' tailor). I held the magazines farled so that anybody with normal vision would be able to spot my name on the cover of the top one. Sunshine played on the plastic and neon of the boutiques and on the long legs that flickered down the street in shoals beneath bobbing Mary Quant miniskirts.

You might say I felt pretty good. A girl on the other side of the street signaled and ran over, laughing. She had large black eyes and cropped hair. I had met her at a party a week before, and we had gone to bed in my studio. Either I had lost her number or I had written it down wrong or illegibly, because I hadn't been able to find her again. I smiled.

She stopped short and switched her own smile off. "I'm sorry," she said. "I thought you were somebody else."

Don't you remember? I babbled. We met at such-and-such a place, and we, um, you know, er.

She gave a min/max smile and ducked into a record store. The neon suddenly looked shrill, the plastic dull, the long legs around me were swimming away, unavailable.

Now, this was at a time when a King's Road neighbor was Germaine Greer, then laboring at a treatise that she had given the working title *The Clitoris Strikes Back*. More sensibly titled *The Female Eunuch*, it became a core treatise in the feminist movement. The young woman in the street, whose name I have now managed to forget—though not nearly as quickly as she forgot mine—was actually a fairly typical member of what soon became an astonishingly numerous tribe. They would work, rather listlessly, on the fringes of the fashion, music, or movie industries. They might become a rock musician's live-in, or immigrate to the States as a status secretary. There was little Germaine could teach them about quick, careless fun, but did they regard themselves as being in the vanguard of the sexual revolution? I doubt if such a thought perturbed too many of those Vidal Sassooned heads, but oddly, or not so oddly, it was girls like these, and not the Germaine Greers, who became the sexual revolution's most conspicuous consumers as we entered the '70s.

**T**HE '70S WERE DIFFERENT. THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION was now just a slogan for marketing the proliferating centerfold magazines. Flesh empires were emerging. In California a girlfriend took me to an orgy organized by one of the main porn movie makers of the time. He was a man with various mystical pretensions, and it was annoyingly touché-fée, with temple bells on the tape deck.

I still remember seeing the wounded, bird-bright eyes of my girlfriend, who had declined to take part, as another young woman went to work on me. Oddly, I ran into that fresh-faced young woman on the street a couple of days later. She was with some fellow college kids, carrying books. She was friendly, polite, as to an older party. I felt quite strange.

In the mid-'70s I moved to Manhattan (my life can be faulted in many regards, but not, I think, my timing). Manhattan's difference from California was reflected in a curious institution then in its heyday, Plato's Retreat.

Plato's was an orgy club. It in no way, though, was remin-

cent of the modish goings-on in Rome in the '50s. Nor was it much like the cosmic cavortings in California in the '60s, which were I'm-okay-you're-okay to the point of religiosity. Neither *modish* nor *religiose* were quite the words that would come to mind regarding Plato's. The clothing out of which the customers—or swingers, as they liked to be known—so enthusiastically leapt ran the gamut from polyester to tailored jeans, but the only decadent elitists there tended to be the bug-eyed Eurotrash and Latin Americans upon whose itineraries Plato's was a must.

Mass formation certainly made for an astounding spectacle, but it happens to be one that I find an erotic, so I only actually went to Plato's three times, as a sort of tour guide. On my third visit, there was such a welter of amorous activity in the swimming pool that it looked like the sea lions' pond in the London Zoo at feeding time. One of the women I was with got to talking to the lifeguard—a legal necessity, apparently, even when the last thing a pool is used for is swimming. The lifeguard looked at the heaving, turbulent, scummy waters, and told her, very earnestly, "You know, ma'am, *nothing in the world* is going to get me into that pool."

Some other snippets of conversation I collected in that time, in the light of what has come, have a virile libertinism that already seems antique, like the mores of a vanishing culture. One woman, now an esteemed member of New York's literary establishment, told me that in her first few years in the city, she slept with "about four hundred men." Or some of the priapic tales of which men are mordantly fond come to mind, or episodes that went dangerously off the wall.

I remember, for instance, meeting a young woman in the restaurant Nicola's. She was fresh from the Sun Belt that very day, and houseless. I took her home in an altruistic glow, put her in my bed, and slept on the sofa.

The following morning I left early, telling her to make herself comfortable. That afternoon there was a bit of a spring in my step as I hurried home. I found her naked and insensible in the living room. She had drunk everything in the house. That night she got the sofa. I talked her into her clothes next morning and got her out of the house, I don't know how. She left screaming about her "connections." After I shaved, I found that she had drunk the aftershave too. Would I take on such a responsibility in these times? Not in light years.

Here's a tale from the early '80s. I was telephoned by a woman I used to see something of, a woman of huge but slightly indeterminate ambition, meaning she wanted to be a star but wasn't sure what at. I hadn't laid eyes on her in maybe three years. Call her Yolanda. The call went like this:

**Yolanda:** How are you?  
**Me:** Fine. Great to hear from you, et cetera. What's up?  
**Yolanda:** Oh, nothing much. I'm in town for a bit. Oh, and I've got two babies.  
**Me:** Really? Uh, wonderful!

I was tumbling here toward one of the trick questions in the new etiquette: How does one ask if wedding bells were involved? Yolanda helped me out.

**Yolanda:** They're girls. One's by Bobby Bacon.  
 Please note that Bobby Bacon is not the real name of the actual father, a writer whose last but one book had been tremendously successful but whose latest had just come out and been derided by all, including the mother of his child.

**Yolanda:** Don't read it. It's terrible.  
 I mention this as a poignant example of the star fuck, the

unasked questions being a "Would Yolanda have bedded the author after his flop?" by How come the papa of her other child didn't rate a credit? The star fuck has, of course, been around as long as there have been stars—"stars" for this purpose being, according to taste, anybody from Austrian princes to poets to college basketball players—but it was with the rise of the rock industry in the '60s, with all those gigs and tours and festivals, that stars became ubiquitous, and numerous, and above all, available. The status of the star fuck as a lopsided modern romance, a sort of *Zero and Juliet*, ascended yet higher in the celebrity fixated '70s and '80s. What was John Hinckley but a love-lorn swain with a handgun?

Oddly, the phenomenon has received rather little attention. Perhaps where writers and moviemakers are concerned it all comes uncomfortably close to home? At any rate, star fucking can be expected to wane rather dramatically, by common consent of acolytes and stars, but it will never die out wholly. Not among those truly possessed of celebrity fever, anyway. It's as with Romeo and Juliet or Tristan and Yseult. The risk of death is part of the romance.

Here's one more tale of the exhilarating '80s, post-herpes but pre-AIDS. It concerns a friend of mine, a TV director, whom I might as well call Morgan. Morgan had split up with his wife, a beautiful and accomplished woman, after a marriage of ten years. He was sliding grumpily into middle age and was still coasting on a lifelong reputation as a phlanderer, despite the fact that he had been impotent for a year—in fact, since the collapse of his marriage.

He met a girl at a party. "A double barreled debby type," he says. She was an ingenue model, seventeen, not the sort who modeled lingerie or party dresses but wholesome nature-girl stuff like running shorts, ski boots, bikinis. Call her Lucy.

It happened that Morgan was leaving for Greece a couple of days later. He was to stay in a house belonging to a friend on one of the islands. Impulsively, he asked Lucy to go with him.

"Great," she said, blithely.

They got seats on an older vComet and flew from Gatwick. Most of the plane was taken up by a package tour, middle-aged women from an industrial town in the Midlands who were catching balloons and leafing through shiny brochures of the fun spots that awaited them. As the plane drifted over the Adriatic, the tour group began to serenade a pair of honeymooners. Their songs veered from the sentimental to the cheerfully dirty-minded. Morgan and Lucy joined in. They were holding hands.

They had a one-night stopover on the island of Corfu. Morgan toted his and Lucy's bags through the indifferent customs, taxied to the hotel, and checked in. It was then that he began to be seriously concerned. "She was languid, exhausted," he told me. "She seemed to be about to faint."

He put her to bed. "She was sweating fiercely," he said. "She didn't want to fuck. We never did fuck. At first I thought it was just that I was another rich sucker."

Morgan found out differently when they were on their flight the next day, because the heroin Lucy was carrying in her vanity case ran out and she got truly sick. "She wanted to get off the flight," he said. "She wanted to go score." No dice.

Didn't she realize what she was doing to herself? Morgan asked her. Certainly she realized. Such and such a friend had OD'd. Also so-and-so. "What do I have to live for?" she asked him. "I don't like my mother. I don't like my father. I'll be dead by the time I'm twenty-six. I know that. I don't care."

She was seventeen. Twenty-six was another lifetime away. In any event, she OD'd long before twenty-six. It was this strange indifference that drugginess imparted. There were the coke whores, male and female, who would do anything with

anybody for a night of toots. There was the girl who ended up mostly making love to other women, not through preference, or so she said, but simply because she couldn't be bothered to take the Pill. This was sex all right, but was it a sexual revolution?

**A**IDS HAD MADE ITS LEAP FROM MEDICAL columns to the covers of mass-circulation magazines, but the hardcore gay sex clubs were still banging away. I decided to make the rounds.

My guide—I will call him Guy—warned me I wouldn't get in anywhere incorrectly dressed (a rule in most clubs, of course), so I wore jeans, battered brown riding boots, and a basic black T-shirt. We took off in a group of four (just one of us being gay) for the clubs, which were on the Lower West Side of Manhattan in the onetime meat packing district.

The Spike made for a mild beginning. The Spike was a leather bar, which is to say the patrons mostly wore black leather jackets accessorized with chains, or full black leather suits and black leather caps with visors. Handkerchiefs dangling from hip pockets were a visual code, indicating the preferred pleasures of the wearer (one guy sported four handkerchiefs, suggesting amazing versatility). There was a lot of cruising going on, but no actual sex play. We ordered cans of beer (too cautiously, perhaps, none of us were touching glassware), watched the pool players, and departed. So far, so placid.

The Hellfire Club was less torpid. It encouraged sexual variants of all sorts, which is to say that, unlike our first stop, it also admitted women, so that, at first sight, it looked not unlike the clubroom of some workout center, with a bar, a counter to buy stuff, and a bunch of athletic machines.

At first sight, that was—before the details began to emerge. The large mural on the rear wall, for instance, depicted the devil seated on a satyr, in keeping with the club's internal regions motif. To the left of the entrance, a female bum jutted out from beneath the skirt of its wearer, who was leaning on a bench with an abstracted smile. We examined the wares at the trinket stand—rings, tweaks, thongs, and handkerchiefs—where a middle-aged man was being fitted for a spiked collar, and strolled across to the machines. These included a complex gizmo of leather and metal, involving hooks and chains, a larger contraption, to which were attached several sets of handcuffs, and a pink thing, sort of an exercise machine, with pink Leatherette saddles here and there, and reclining there, alone, was a pudgy, naked young man with an optimistic smile.

There was a slight eddy of excitement. People—some dressed, some partially dressed, some naked—had formed into a slowly moving queue. Guy and I joined out of interest, passing the woman on the bench, who had lost her admirer but was now having a bare foot fondled by a male and was still smiling. At the back we passed from the main clubroom into a dimmer space, subdivided into cubicles. The queue that we had joined was silent, grimly determined, and headed for one particular cubicle right at the back. Everybody in the queue was male.

It was a slow business, and we couldn't see what was going on at all, only that every short while whoever had been heading up the line would turn around and walk past us with a look of gazed impassivity, and we would shuffle a few steps forward. I would say twenty to thirty men had been and gone before Guy and I were close enough to see just what it was that we were queuing for.

A head of long, shiny, dark hair was pressed into a male groin. The male form shuddered, retracted, and walked past us, while we caught a glimpse of an upturned face before its mouth took in another penis and sunk to its task.

(continued on page 122)



Is there another Bugsy among them? Bogart? Humphrey? The four mobsters dress the part for stardom. Patrick Dempsey (left), Richard Grieco, Christian Slater, and Costas Mandylor.



# FASHION

## LEARN

A trick question: Properly identify V2. Is it a) a small but formidable peak in the Himalayas? or b) the diet version of a popular vegetable drink? The answer in a moment, but first, a few words about the actors on this page

Christian Slater, Costas Mandylor, Richard Grieco, and Patrick Dempsey can be seen this month in *Mobsters*.

ers have been launching alternative lines with names that are usually derivative of their own—Joseph Abboud's JA II or Giorgio Armani's Emporio Armani—in addition to their couture collections. A second line allows a designer to create items that might be inappropriate at the couture level or to re-create popular items from the couture line, but

## YOUR

the story of Lucky Luciano, Frank Costello, Bugsy Siegel, and Meyer Lansky, who ruled the underworld from 1917 to 1930. What do they have in common with the clothes? Simple. Actor or not, any man who wants to be well dressed needs to know his lines. And these days it can be confusing

For the last decade, design-

less expensively. Second-line clothing, however, doesn't mean second-class or second-hand, it just means second line. So the next time you run across them in a department store or specialty shop, give them a second look. And now, back to our trick question. The correct answer is c) a second line designed by Gianni Versace. Thank you for playing

## LINE S

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS



## CHRISTIAN SLATER

It is probably only a matter of time before Christian Slater admits he's the illegitimate son of Jack Nicholson. The voice. The eyebrows. It's clear. The twenty-one-year-old Slater has appeared in nearly a dozen films, most notably *Boyz n the City*, *Boys*, and *Young Guns II*. After *Nicholson*, he can be seen with Kevin Costner in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*.

By David Karger

Photograph by [illegible]

Styling by [illegible]

Makeup by [illegible]

Hair by [illegible]

Shirts by [illegible]

Shoes by [illegible]

Accessories by [illegible]

Location: [illegible]

Director of Photography: [illegible]

Production Designer: [illegible]

Executive Producer: [illegible]

Producer: [illegible]

Screenplay by [illegible]

Story by [illegible]

Music by [illegible]

Costume Designer: [illegible]

Production Office: [illegible]

Post-Production: [illegible]

Distribution: [illegible]

Release Date: [illegible]

Box Office: [illegible]

Critical Acclaim: [illegible]

Awards: [illegible]

Cast: [illegible]

Crew: [illegible]

Special Thanks: [illegible]

Contact: [illegible]

Website: [illegible]

Facebook: [illegible]

Twitter: [illegible]

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#### RICHARD GRIECO

For those who aren't teenage girls, Richard Grieco (shriek now if you are) made his name as detective Bookie Booker on *21 Jump Street* and then as its spin-off, *Booker*. This spring, Grieco went on to star in his first movie, *It Looks Good to Me*. But with his portrayal of Baggy Magal, Grieco will certainly shed some of that book image and leave the *Stewart* crowd behind.

By [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]



#### PATRICK DEMPSEY

Though Patrick Dempsey is best known for his light-comedy roles—*Leverage*, *Don't Say No Love*, *Scope de Ville*—he's an actor who should be taken seriously. In addition to film, Dempsey, twenty-five, appeared in a San Francisco production of *Tarant Seng Trilogy* and in the national tour of Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. Last month, Dempsey made his off-Broadway debut in *The Subject Was Roses*.

By [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]



# Light in July



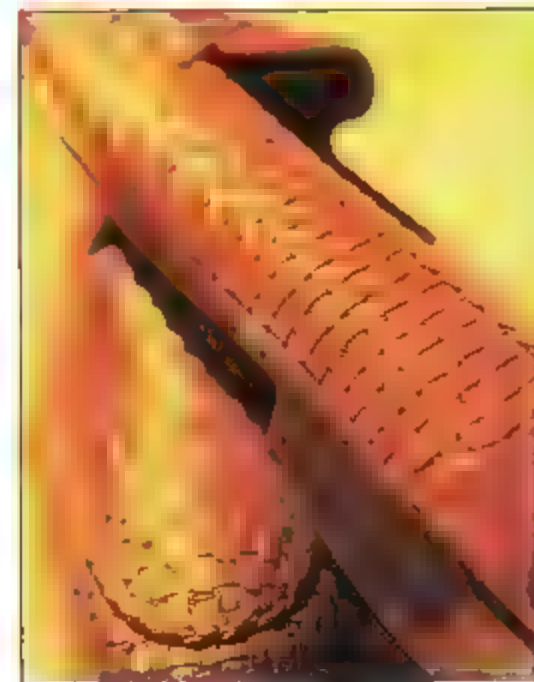
Woven-leather  
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Fratelli Rossetti.

ASSUMING YOU'RE BORED WITH bucks and sick of (or sickened by) sandals, there is a comfortable alternative. Woven-leather shoes can dress up a linen suit, tropical-weight trousers, or your favorite pair of jeans. So this summer, why not stay cool from heel to toe?

Photographs by Gerhard Jurkovic



Above: Leather lace-up shoes with woven-leather front by Polo/Ralph Lauren Footwear.



Above: Woven-leather-and-crocodile penny loafers by Cole-Haan (top); woven-leather slip-on shoes by Bally of Switzerland (bottom).



Above: Woven-leather lace-up shoes by Brass Boot (top and bottom); woven-leather cap-toe shoes by A. Testoni (middle). Store information on page 121.



SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Quitting Smoking  
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The Writer in Hollywood

# GLORY AND HUMILIATION IN THE SCREEN TRADE

A \$1,000,000 insult beats a \$300,000 insult any damn day  
By Aljean Harmetz

**I**N THICK THREE-RING binders with pink and yellow blue and green pages, each Hollywood studio rates from 1,200 to 1,500 screenwriters. The alphabetical A-lists usually begin with Jim Abrahams and end with his ex-partners David and Jerry Zucker—the three writer-directors of *Airplane!*—and they always include Woody Allen. The books are forever six months out of date, with this month's hot screenwriters—Jeffrey Abrams and Richard Friedenberg—mired in the B-lists until the next revision. The ratings vary, each studio favoring writers it has worked with, but they do not vary by much. And all the books tell the same unintentional story



It is the story of a double frustration. Following each writer's name are the scripts that have been made into movies and the longer list of those that have not. Bo Goldman shared credit on an Academy Award-winning screenplay for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. He has also written thirteen unproduced scripts. Even Joe Eszterhas, whose *Basic Instinct* was sold for \$3 million, has a portfolio of seventeen unproduced screenplays. And rarely do produced screenplays reach the screen without a list of writers as long as the tail of a kite. Metro Goldwyn Mayer used ten writers on *The Wizard of Oz* in 1939. Disney used eight on *Turner & Hooch* in 1989.

Despite a momentary increase in status, it has almost always been the worst of times for screenwriters. "We have always been treated like dirt," says Nicholas Kazan, whose screenplay for *Reversal of Fortune* won him an Academy Award nomination and a \$500,000 job rewriting *Mobsters* for Universal.

Another successful writer sent new scenes to Warner Bros. in December 1944 with this note:

"The following rewritten and additional scenes for *The Big Sleep* were done by the author in respectful joy and happy admiration after he had gone off salary and while on his way back to Mississippi. With grateful thanks to the studio for the cheerful and crowded day coach which alone saved him from wasting his time in dull and profitless rest and sleep.  
With love  
William Faulkner"

THE MASTER SLAVE equation between Hollywood and its writers has never been simple. If few writers can afford yachts, most have no trouble buying a Mercedes. If little of what they write reaches the screen unchanged, they are well paid for their frustration and can live for years on the money from a script that is serially optioned by half a dozen producers but never produced. And if they are discarded when the bonfire is burning bright, they are the necessary match that ignites it. "Everyone else in the film business is an alchemist," says Kazan. "They change one thing into another. We are like gods, creating out of a void."

In Hollywood, money has always meant status, and screenwriters are making more money than ever. More important, in a town where \$1-million-a-year executives throw tantrums because the shaky studio down the street is paying \$2 million, the huge disparity between the money studios pay actors and the money they pay writers is shrinking. "For the first time, some writers are getting paid more than serious character actors like John Malkovich," says Frank Pierson, whose career stretches from *Cat Ballou* to *Presumed Innocent*.

One million dollars is the new talisman. When Paramount offered Robert Towne \$750,000 to rewrite *Days of Thunder*, and Towne held out for \$1 million, former studio president Ned Tanen, who still casts a long shadow, told the studio to give Towne what he wanted because Paramount was on the verge of losing its star, Tom Cruise, who wanted Towne to write a new script.

Universal is paying Tom Stoppard \$1 million a year to be on call. In addition to writing scripts for the studio, the playwright is expected to pitch in when somebody else's script needs mending. If Stoppard does enough emergency surgery, he may end up being a bargain for Universal. Today, when a movie has a definite start date and the terrified producer is finding it hard to

sleep without a two-vodka nightcap, trauma experts are brought in at \$100,000 a week to patch up the script. The writer of *Ghost*, Bruce Joel Rubin, was paid \$100,000 each week for seven weeks to operate on *The Mrs.*, a movie starring Goldie Hawn for Disney release. David Ward did a three-week rewrite on Columbia's *Machine Gun Kelly* for \$275,000.

THERE ARE WATERFALLS behind Larry Gelbart's Beverly Hills mansion and a jungle of palm trees so dense that, he quips, "You need a native bearer to get through here." Any way, he says, the torrents of water cascading down the rocks into his pool are "cheaper than going to Hawaii." Gelbart doesn't have to worry about plane fare to Hawaii. His bottom fee for a script is more than a million dollars, and his musical *City of Angels* has been playing on Broadway since December 11, 1989. Now he is polishing the second draft of a script he has written for producer Ray Stark from *Barbarians at the Gate*, a book about the leveraged buyout of RJR Nabisco. But Gelbart still remembers the moment in 1961 when he discovered that S. N. Behrman was rewriting Blake Edwards's *Notorious Landlady*, a script Gelbart had already rewritten. "It was my first exposure to the system. It broke my heart. A writer can never get rich enough or old enough or famous enough to be safe. You're paid more for the pain now. With iron pampers getting eight-figure salaries, some of the insanity spills over on us. And it's better to get a million-dollar insult than a \$300,000 insult. You can buy more expensive salve for your wounds."

Not Simon can afford boxcars of ointment. Instead of earning a fee for the sale and adaptation of his play *Lost in Yonkers*, Simon takes 11 percent of Columbia's revenues on the movie. Like stars and directors, he'll share in the studio's gross profits. But neither Simon's money nor his fame kept Kim Basinger from rewriting her lines or subverting his script for *The Marrying Man*.

The problem for even the best paid screenwriters is that the screenplay can never be more than a blueprint for the movie. "Screenplays that are a mess turn into fabulous movies, and fabulous screenplays become awful movies," says Larry Mark, the producer of *One Good Cop* and *True Colors*.

James Dearden's original ending for *Fatal Attraction* showed the last scene of the opera *Madame Butterfly*, with the title character committing hara kiri. In Paramount's version, the wronged wife, Anne Archer, riddes the other woman, Glenn Close, with bullets. "In a perfect world, it would have the ending I wrote," says Dearden. "But would I rather be the writer of a modestly successful thriller? I'm glad they changed the ending. It wasn't my film by then. It was the director's. If you don't direct your film, you don't recognize your offspring anyway."

Dearden wrote the new ending for *Fatal Attraction*. "If I didn't, somebody else would have," he shrugs.

"To the studio, it's like having two vet workmen on a house," says Naomi Foner, who won an Academy Award nomination in 1988 for *Running on Empty*. "If the first one doesn't fix the house the way you want, you get another."

Paramount paid Tom Clancy \$600,000 for his book *The Hunt for Red October*. Donald Stewart did the first script and rewrote it four times for \$250,000. He was replaced by Robert Garland, who wrote two drafts for \$175,000. Larry Ferguson rewrote Garland's screenplay for \$350,000. Then John McTier, who had been hired to direct *Hunt for Red October*, worked on more screenplays with Ferguson and a new writer, David Shaber, who was paid \$75,000. At the last minute Sean Connery was brought in to play the Russian submarine captain

For \$125,000, John Milius, as a favor to Connery, tailored the action and dialogue to the movie's new star. The final credits read: Screenplay by Larry Ferguson and Donald Stewart. Whether because of or despite the platoon of writers, *Hunt for Red October* was a box-office smash.

The use of multiple writers makes it almost impossible to assign blame or praise accurately. 3000, J. F. Lawton's original screenplay for *Pretty Woman*, was "powerful in its bleakness," says Dale Pollock, president of A&M Films. "I was horrified when I saw the movie." Robert Garland, Stephen Metcalfe, and Barbara Benedek turned 3000 into a fairy tale, changing 80 percent of the first script. Because none of the three was responsible for 51 percent of the final screenplay, the Writers Guild gave Lawton sole credit for a film he publicly disowned.

EVEN IN THE best of years, only a rare movie with an uncomfortable theme—*Midnight Cowboy* or *Platoon*—does well at the box office. But the decade between 1979 (*Superman*) and 1989 (*Batman*) was relentless in its emphasis on movies that were cut out of cardboard and glued together with expensive special effects. Audiences have finally become bored with those prefab formulas, and writers are the beneficiaries. The top three movies of 1990 were *Home Alone*, *Ghost*, and *Pretty Woman*, while *Robocop 2* was a bust. This shift in how audiences want to be entertained allows studio executives to gentrify the word, the word being cheaper than special effects. ("In the beginning was the word," says Pierson, who won an Oscar in 1975 for *Dog Day Afternoon*. "Then someone decided that actors should get paid three times as much.")

The change from an-explosion-during-the-opening-credits to maybe-there-can-be-some-sexy-dialogue has made it necessary to have writers who are more than carpenters. "The idea is king," wrote Jeffrey Katzenberg, chairman of Walt Disney Studios, in a twenty-eight-page memo. Even if the rush by studio executives to praise screenwriters is merely today's fad, there will inevitably be more emphasis on writers because the major studios have begun to double and triple the number of movies they make each year. But being essential does not guarantee glamour. It is the sale for more than a million dollars apiece of scripts written on speculation that has momentarily made writers, in Hollywood jargon, sexy.

Until a few years ago, almost all scripts were written on assignment. A studio might pay a young writer \$50,000 for "a draft and a set," the basic screenplay and one or two revisions. If the movie got made and the screenwriter kept sole credit, he earned another \$150,000. But most scripts didn't get made. They languished in what came to be called development hell.

So, in 1990, screenwriters wrote scripts on their own and handed them to agents who brilliantly manipulated studio rivalries, greed, the need of a new studio head to prove his guts by writing a big check, and the hysteria that attacks sane people who find themselves at an auction. Peter Guher and Jon Peters bought everything in sight for a time after they became co-chairmen of Columbia/TriStar. Ex partners Mario Kassar (Carolco) and Andy Vajna (Cinerge) fought each other for *Basic Instinct* (Carolco, \$3 million) and *The Stand* (Cinerge, \$2.5 million). Some agents were not above a little fraud. "One agent told me about creating a bidding war with only one person, and she outbid herself by \$500,000," says Sara Risher, president of production at New Line.

Sometimes psychology is better than fraud. When *The Cheese*

*Stands Alone*, a comedy about a thirty-five-year-old male virgin, was put on the market last October, studios were told it was the work of a twenty-three-year-old whiz kid, Kathy McWorter. Actually, McWorter was twenty-eight and had already sold scripts to Warner Bros. and director Richard Donner. "By tweaking, I created a novelty," says Randal Skolnik, who sold *The Cheese Stands Alone* for \$1 million to Paramount. "A twenty-eight-year-old working writer wasn't as interesting."

In the harsh light of the morning after, a lot of executives woke up with big-money hangovers. Bruce Willis has backed out of an agreement to star in *The Ticking Man*, which Largo bought for \$1 million. Paramount tried to sell *The Cheese Stands Alone* to another studio. When Guher and Peters hired Frank Price to run Columbia, Price planted his flag by dumping *Fire Down Below*, which his bosses had bought for \$400,000. But, in general, the more the studios have to pay, the more likely the movie will really get made.

It is spec scripts and the passion to get rich quick that has caused would-be screenwriters to swarm into southern California, streams of ants heading for the sticky Hollywood kitchen.

"Screenwriters are flooding in by the busload," says Marjorie Lewis, New Line's vice-president of creative affairs. "The teeming masses from film school are driven here not by love of writing but by the chance to go from poverty to success in one week. It's like winning a game show."

The young screenwriters are likely to find that the scripts in their suitcases and the avarice in their hearts will not buy much.

In 1991, spec scripts are last year's news. "Until last December, it was the best time in history for the screenwriter," says Geoffrey Sanford, of Sanford-Skouras-Gross, perhaps the only agent with a master's degree in philosophy, who wonders whether it is absolutely necessary to be a bad person in order to be successful in Hollywood. "Now the town is in a cycle of trying to hold down costs. Warner Bros. had a disastrous Christmas. Their solution was to cut down on the cost of screenwriters."

In the last few months, most of the money being paid for spec scripts is contingent on the movie getting made. In Carolco's recent \$2-million deal for a pirate script, *Cutthroat Island*, the co-writers get no more than \$500,000 unless their script is turned into a film. Not that \$500,000 is bad. But prices are likely to go even lower. The only companies still consistently bidding for the screenplays that novices can write most easily—scripts about walking nuclear bombs and ripoffs of *Lethal Weapon* that require structure rather than character or dialogue—are such independents as Largo, Carolco, Morgan Creek, and Cinerge. Universal, 20th Century Fox, Paramount, and Disney are spending their money signing quality screenwriters to long-term contracts.

"We're trying to tie them up with golden handcuffs, exclusive deals that allow them to direct," says Casey Silver, president of production at Universal. "When you make twenty to thirty movies a year, you need good material." In addition to Stoppard, Universal has signed contracts with David Koepp, Robin Swicord, and the teams of Peter Seaman and Jeffrey Price and Ray Gideon and Bruce Evans. Fox's Joe Roth and Roger Birnbaum enticed Dale Launer, Pat Proft, and George Gallo. And, in return for allowing Nora Ephron to direct, Fox is guaranteed another opportunity to use her talents as a screenwriter. Paramount landed Steve Zaillian. It is questionable how much success Disney will have at luring top writers. Screenwriters are venomous about the "dumb" Disney executives who "treat you horribly and give you pages and pages of notes written in pidgin English."



# WHO'S WHO RIGHT NOW

THESE LISTS ARE BASED ON INTERVIEWS with screenwriters, producers, agents, vice-presidents in charge of development, executives at smaller companies, major studio executives who can greenlight movies, and the well-guarded lists that studios use to rank screenwriters. Read them quickly, very fast rotation is inevitable.

—ALJEAN HARMETZ

## The Million-Dollar Club

On the right day, for the right script and two sets of revisions, some studios will pay these writers over \$1 million. On bad days they're likely to get \$800,000.

RON BASS  
JOE ESZTERHAS  
LARRY GELBART  
WILLIAM GOLDMAN  
RICHARD PRICE  
NEIL SIMON  
ROBERT TOWNE

## Cottage Industries

Tucked away from the mainstream, they write and direct quirky, eccentric, or defiantly personal films.

ALBERT BROOKS  
PAUL MAZURSKY  
SPIKE LEE  
JOHN SAYLES  
PAUL SCHRADER

## Writing Your Way to Power

Screenwriters who reign as directors and as producers of their own and other people's movies. Box-office failures have for the time being removed Robert Benton, James Bridges, Michael Cimino, and Blake Edwards from this list.

WOODY ALLEN  
JAMES L. BROOKS  
FRANCIS COPPOLA  
JOHN HUGHES  
LARRY KASDAN  
BARRY LEVINSON  
OLIVER STONE  
ROBERT ZEMECKIS

## Page Turners

Scripts that grab the blase studio executive from the very first page. Sometimes an exercise in style over substance.

SHANE BLACK  
*The Last Boy Scout*  
JOE ESZTERHAS  
*Basic Instinct*  
PETER FILARDI  
*Flatliners*  
WILLIAM GOLDMAN  
Anything he writes

## Hitting the Jackpot

The spec script auctioned off to the highest bidder. Often deceptive. The \$2-million deal for *Cutthroat Island* is only worth \$500,000 to writers Michael Beckner and Jim Gorman if the movie doesn't get made. The \$1-million deal for *Ultimatum* includes a second script by writers Laurence Dworet and Robert Roy Pool.

JOE ESZTERHAS	<i>Basic Instinct</i>	\$3 million
TOM SCHULMAN	<i>The Stand</i>	\$2.5 million
JEFFREY ABRAMS	<i>The Rest of Daniel</i>	\$2 million
SHANE BLACK	<i>The Last Boy Scout</i>	\$1.75 million
JOE ESZTERHAS	<i>Original Sin</i>	\$1.55 million
PEN DENSIAM/ JOHN WATSON	<i>Prince of Thieves</i>	\$1.2 million
DAVID MICKY EVANS	<i>Radio Flyer</i>	\$1.1 million
BRIAN HELGELAND/ MANNY COTO	<i>The Ticking Man</i>	\$1 million
KATHY MCWORTER	<i>The Cheese Stands Alone</i>	\$1 million
MICHAEL BECKNER/ JIM GORMAN	<i>Texas Lead and Gold</i>	\$1 million
RICK JAFFA/ DOUG RICHARDSON	<i>Hell Bent... and Back</i>	\$1 million

## Throwing Heat

Everybody wants them.

TOM SCHULMAN *Dead Poets Society*  
RICHARD LAGRAVENESE *The Fisher King*  
JEFFREY ABRAMS *Regarding Henry*  
TED TALLY *Silence of the Lambs*  
WESLEY STRICK *Final Analysis*  
STEPHEN METCALFE *Pretty Woman* rewrite  
RICHARD FRIEDENBERG *Dying Young*  
BRUCE JOEL RUBIN *Ghost*  
CAROLINE THOMPSON *Edward Scissorhands*  
SCOTT FRANK *Dead Again*  
JIM HART *Hook*, *Dracula*  
MITCH MARKOWITZ *Good Morning, Vietnam*  
KEVIN WADE *Working Girl*

## Revitalized by a Hit

These hardworking professionals have had their images buffed up once again by a recent box-office success.

FRANK PIERSON  
*Presumed Innocent*  
DAVID WARD  
*Major League*  
WILLIAM GOLDMAN  
*Misery*

## Studio Pets

Some studios have their own rewrite favorites.

JEFF BOAM  
Warner Bros.  
JAMES CRICKSHANK/  
JAMES ORR  
Touchstone  
LARRY FERGLSON  
Paramount  
DAN PETRIE JR.  
Hollywood

## Screenwriter's Screenwriters

Only writers were allowed to vote, and their choices were limited to American films. Preston Sturges and Billy Wilder led the all-time list by a wide margin.

WOODY ALLEN  
BO GOLDMAN  
WILLIAM GOLDMAN  
NICHOLAS KAZAN  
ALVIN SARGENT  
PAUL SCHRADER  
ROBERT TOWNE

## And the all-timers:

PRESTON STURGES  
BILLY WILDER/  
CHARLES BRACKETT  
BILLY WILDER/  
I.A.L. DIAMOND  
ROBERT RISKIN  
DUDLEY NICHOLS  
JOSEPH MANKIEWICZ  
JOHN HUSTON

## Most Impressive Comeback

At the age of 91, CHARLES BENNETT, whose long collaboration with Alfred Hitchcock included *The 39 Steps* and *Foreign Correspondent*, is co-writing a script for 20th Century Fox based on his 1929 movie, *Blackmail*.

## Perennials

Year in and year out you can count on them.

RICHARD PRICE  
LOWELL GANZ/  
BABALOO MANDEL  
JOHN HUGHES  
BO GOLDMAN  
ALVIN SARGENT  
KURT L. EDTRIE

## Writing Samples

Scripts that established the writer's studio reputation years before they were produced. Note that a good script did not always translate into a good movie.

*Jacob's Ladder*  
BRUCE JOEL RUBIN

*Little Man Tate*  
SCOTT FRANK

*Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*

CHRIS MATHESON/  
ED SOLOMON

*Dead Poets Society*  
TOM SCHULMAN

*At Close Range*  
NICHOLAS KAZAN

*Ruthless People*  
DALE LAUNER

*Benjamin Button*  
ROBIN SWICORD

## One Great Season

Like a baseball player who hits twenty-nine home runs and bats .290 one glorious year and is on the bench three years later, some writers have a moment in the sun followed by vaguely disappointing careers.

WILLARD HUYCK/  
GLORIA KATZ  
*American Graffiti*  
LESLIE DIXON  
*Outrageous Fortune*  
CHRIS GEROLMO  
*Mississippi Burning*  
DOUGLAS DAY STEWART  
*An Officer and a Gentleman*  
CAROLE EASTMAN  
*Five Easy Pieces*  
TOM RICKMAN  
*Coal Miner's Daughter*

## On the Way

There is more disagreement here than in any other category. One studio's diamond in the rough is another's rhinestone.

KEVIN JARRE  
CALLIE KHOURI  
KATHY MCWORTER  
LYNN SEEFERT  
MARY AGNES DONOGHUE  
LEWIS COLICK  
ANDREW CHAPMAN  
MICHAEL LEESON  
GARY ROSS  
BECKY JOHNSTON  
DAVID KOEPP  
MICHAEL TOLKIN  
JOSH AND DAN GOLDIN  
JOHN KOSTMAYER  
ED SOLOMON

## Trauma Experts

The old script doctor has been replaced by emergency-room surgeons who are brought in by panic-stricken producers and paid up to \$100,000 a week.

WARREN SKAAREN\*  
*Batman*, *Days of Thunder*, *Top Gun*, *Beetlejuice*

ROBERT TOWNE  
*Days of Thunder*  
BRUCE JOEL RUBIN  
*The Mrs.*

LARRY FERGLSON  
*The Hunt for Red October*  
CARRIE FISHER  
Hired to punch up comedy dialogue

WESLEY STRICK  
*Arachnophobia*, *Cape Fear*  
BARBARA BENEDEK  
*Pretty Woman* rewrite

\*Warren Skaaren died several months ago. Says one producer, "Warren is still in demand. He's just not available."

## Worst Studio

Disney was the worst by acclamation. No studio stood out as offering writers comfort and good cheer, although Orion, Universal, and New Line did get a few votes.

## The Literary Contingent

Novelists and playwrights who are dipping into Hollywood with critical as well as financial success.

DAVID MAMET  
DAVID RABE  
RICHARD PRICE  
TED TALLY  
JOAN DIDION/JOHN GREGORY DLNNE  
TOM STOPPARD  
JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY  
JOHN SAYLES

## Ambitious Balancing Acts

These are writers who also direct. They range from Shelton, Columbus, Robinson, and Ward, who have directed at least one big hit, to Thompson, Gould, Gallo, Ephron, and Zailalian, who are directing their first films.

NICHOLAS KAZAN  
*Reversal of Fortune*  
STEVE ZAILLIAN  
*Awakenings*, *Jack the Bear*  
CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON  
*Dangerous Liaisons*  
ANNA HAMILTON PHELAN  
*Gorillas in the Mist*

DAVID WARD  
*Major League*, *King Ralph*  
STEVE KLOVES  
*The Fabulous Baker Boys*  
ROBERT TOWNE  
*Tequila Sunrise*  
ANDREW BERGMAN  
*The Freshman*

CAMERON CROWE  
*Say Anything*  
WHIT STILLMAN  
*Metropolitan*  
BRUCE ROBINSON  
*Jennifer Eight*  
JAMES DEARDEN  
*A Kiss Before Dying*  
CAROLINE THOMPSON  
*Rouge*

HEYWOOD GOULD  
*One Good Cop*  
GEORGE GALLO  
*29th Street*  
NORA EPHRON  
*This Is My Life*\*\*  
STEVE ZAILLIAN  
*Searching for Bobby Fischer*

\*\*Tentative title

## Whiteout

Actors who rewrite. Kim Basinger to Neil Simon. "Whoever wrote this doesn't understand comedy." The line may be apocryphal; the quarrels between writer and star were not.

STEVEN SEAGAL  
*Hard to Kill*\*\*\*  
KIM BASINGER  
*The Marrying Man*  
DEMI MOORE  
*Ghost*

SYLVESTER STALLONE  
*Everything*

DUSTIN HOFFMAN  
Brings in Murray Schisgal to rewrite for him

\*\*\*The writer of Seagal's latest movie, *Out for Justice*, took his name off after Seagal finished with the script.

## Overrated or Overpriced

Allow for a little jealousy and note that many of these names appear on other lists.

JOE ESZTERHAS  
RON BASS  
SHANE BLACK  
MICHAEL CRISTOFER  
JAMES CRICKSHANK/  
JAMES ORR  
JIM CASH/JACK EPPS  
JAY PRESSON ALLEN  
DAVID MAMET



Silver cautions that allowing writers to direct will not always work. There is nothing that guarantees that writers will have either a visual sense or an ability to work with actors. John Patrick Shanley won an Academy Award for his script of *Moonstruck* and struck out when he was allowed to direct *Joe Versus the Volcano*. James Dearden got an Oscar nomination for his script of *Fatal Attraction*. *A Kiss Before Dying*, a movie *Fatal Attraction* allowed him to direct, got mixed reviews and was even booed at an industry preview. Nonetheless, says agent Martin Bauer, "Except for Bill Goldman, the goal of every writer in the United States of America is to be a director."

William Goldman lives back east, far from Hollywood. "Any idiot can direct badly," he says. "To be a quality director is hard." The winner of Academy Awards for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *All the President's Men*, Goldman considers himself a novelist. If his ego depended on protecting his screenplays, he would try to produce them himself.

**I**N AN INDUSTRY that is based on illusion, the greatest illusion of all is that anyone who learned to scrawl his name in crayon in kindergarten can write a screenplay. By the end of a three-day, \$490 course, "students will have a basic understanding of screenwriting principles and an outline for a screenplay," reads a recent bulletin from the University of California at Los Angeles. The UCLA extension writers' program enrolls more than four thousand eager novices each year for courses given in major cities throughout the United States. In addition to screenwriting courses at hundreds of colleges, there are entrepreneurs like John Truby, who teaches story structure in New York and Los Angeles for \$275. And anyone who wants to earn in the privacy of his own home can buy *Collaborator*, a \$299 computer program available for both IBM and Macintosh.

"Who is overpriced and overrated?" asks an exasperated Frank Pierson. "Anyone who graduated from NYU, USC, or UCLA last year. This is an extremely difficult craft. We are writing a description of what a finished work of art will be."

Older screenwriters still talk about art. Younger ones talk about the marketplace. Was *Ghost* a success? Halt the word processors in Hollywood are spewing out scripts about children who try to revive long-dead parents, husbands who go on mystical journeys to reincarnate dead wives.

In a *foi à deux*, producers refuse to take a chance on risky material and then complain about the poor quality of screenplays. Writers complain about the poor quality of producers but never refuse to do the rewrites. "By the end of the weekend my floor is strewn with dreadful scripts I haven't read past page 25," says Howard Rosenman, co-president of Sandollar Films. "Once every four weeks I get a readable script." Ian Abrams, a thirty-five-year-old press agent turned screenwriter who has no screen credits yet but has five scripts under option, says, "Because one producer only had \$3 million, he told me to add character to a script and cut out the special effects. When I revised the script, he said, 'This is better than we thought. I can raise \$9 million on it, so put in an earthquake.' To make room for the earthquake, we took out the character."

Geoffrey Sanford is philosophical. "T. S. Eliot didn't have to please Jeffrey Katzenberg," he says.

Because everything is fad and fashion, momentum and desirability shift as quickly as the hot winds off the desert. When his script for *Pacific Heights* was the object of a bidding war, Dan Pyne was the flavor of the month. But *Pacific Heights* was a

box office disappointment, and the failure of Pyne's next film, a buddy-cop comedy, *The Hard Way*, was made a symbol of the end of that genre. Instantly, the industry ice-cream store replaced Pyne Nut with Rum Rub n. Then Pyne's rewrite of a script called *Doc Hollywood* got Michael J. Fox to commit to the movie, and Pyne Nut was on the menu again.

After Fox bought *Dying Young*, in which Julia Roberts is hired to take care of a young man with leukemia, Richard Friedenberg's agent sent the script to a dozen studios and producers to call attention to his client. Friedenberg, who had written two critically praised television movies, had no screen credits. "This town is not based on logic but on emotion," says Friedenberg, who, at forty-five, has some resistance to Hollywood seductions. "The fact that Fox was going to make the movie changed everything and made me legitimate."

**S**ITTING AT THEIR computers in Brentwood, the Pacific Palisades, Culver City, or the valley, writers worry about being legitimate, about being safe, about being successful. Working in isolation, they are tied to each other through the electronic bulletin board of the Writers Guild. One recent week the subject was whether writers should express a moral vision in their work. It seemed naive and a little sad that craftsmen who must sew and cut to patterns imposed by others should send solemn notes about moral vision. Yet there are signs that the industry's new lip service to writers may be something more.

The symbolic essence of the change is represented by a 107-page spec script titled *Basic Instinct*, which begins: "INT. A BEDROOM—NIGHT. It is dark; we don't see clearly. A man and woman make love on a brass bed."

After the script was bought for \$3 million, Carolco brought in Paul Verhoeven, who had directed its *Total Recall*. Directors, like wolves, have to spray the boundaries of their territory. Last August 8, when Verhoeven and screenwriter Joe Eszterhas met for the first time, Verhoeven attacked the script's structure and characters. He wanted to rattle up the already sexy script, in which a cop becomes entangled with a bisexual woman who may have killed several people. As usual, the studio backed the director. Eszterhas and his producer Irwin Winkler were paid off and left the project.

Talking about *Basic Instinct*, writer after writer twists uneasily in his chair, stammers his disappointment that nothing has really changed, that, as Gelbart phrases it, "Eszterhas was the associate producer and the writer, and the money people sided with the director." But something had changed.

In April, Verhoeven apologized. After working for five months with another writer, Verhoeven admitted he had "highly underestimated" Eszterhas's script, that he had set up the August disaster by being too "blunt," and that the script's construction, "including ending, middle, and beginning, was perfect."

It seemed a glorious victory for the screenwriters. But that wasn't quite the way things faded out. In May, when the movie was on location in San Francisco, gay rights groups protested the depiction of lesbians and bisexual women as murderers. Eszterhas changed his script, agreeing to much of what they demanded. Verhoeven, backed by the star of the movie, Michael Douglas, refused to make the changes.

So it's still a hard world for screenwriters. Joe Eszterhas, the loser in this battle, will have to be satisfied with \$3 million dollars. ■

ALJEAN HARMETZ has covered the film industry for more than twelve years as a correspondent for The New York Times. She grew up in Hollywood, where her mother worked in the wardrobe department at MGM.

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# Why I Write Movies

A FEW WORDS

BY ROBERT TOWNE

SEVERAL YEARS AGO my five-year-old daughter bounced into my study and found me hunched and miserable over my typewriter, feeling like a housewife who couldn't get her stove to boil water. Kate wanted to know why I wouldn't play with her. "Because

I'm stuck." She wanted to know why I was stuck. "Because it's hard," she thought about this for a minute and said, "Then why do it, Dad? Why don't you cease this activity and become an artist?"

By artist she meant painter, of course, but despite its surprising dictum, her question was not an unfamiliar one. It was, in fact, a question I'd heard posed all my life, and not just to me. Writers in every generation since screenplays went off the cuff of the director and onto paper have been asked to respond to it. Generally they have done so with wit, shame, and cynicism—the wisdom of wags and writers from Anita Loos and Ben Hecht to Fitzgerald and Parker has been distilled and codified into Woody Allen's phrase about screenwriting: Take the money and run. Write the great American novel, the Pulitzer Prize-winning play, the well, and don't take screenwriting too seriously. Like parking-lot attendants and waiters in Los Angeles, do it on the way to being an actor or a grown up or an artist, do it as a means to an end—but never as an end in itself. This is a continuing attitude about screenwriting. As Vincent Canby observed not long ago, "I can't imagine why any person who took himself seriously as an artist would pursue it for more than five minutes."

There is only one other thing I can recall being treated with anything like the amusement and contempt and condescension reserved for screenwriters—and that is the city of Los Angeles itself. Since I can remember, it's been called crass, cutish, "the nowhere city," full of vegetation and people and architecture from any and everywhere else on earth. Some called it "southern cafeteria"

because of the proliferation of eating establishments where the old and the odd and the ill would sit tray by tray, spooning their Waldorf salads and dreaming about the future they had come to seek. No one, I suppose, embodied the spirit of contempt and frustration and loathing about Los Angeles more dramatically than Nathanael West. In him, love and hate for Los Angeles collided and finally died in a head-on traffic accident at Sunset and Sepulveda—or so I had been brought up to believe. Actually, West died on the highway in El Centro, just north of Tijuana, purportedly in a hurry to make it to L.A. in time for his buddy Scott Fitzgerald's funeral. Whether it's Nathanael West or David Susskind or Woody Allen, the varying skills of the observer notwithstanding, the observation is likely to be the same: The only good thing about Los Angeles is that you can turn right on red (but not always, and particularly not at Sunset and Sepulveda).

This confluence of opinion about Los Angeles and screenwriting—bugus representations of life and literature, respectively—is something I remember vividly about growing up in that city. The Santa Anas brought hot air from the desert, ocean breezes brought cold air from the Pacific, and the prevailing wind from the east brought the same message over and over: I lived in a world that was, if possible, phonier than the movies it produced.

Even as a child—especially as a child—this name-calling bothered me. I knew that the fishermen I would watch going out to sea in San Pedro were not phony. Their beards would scratch your face, there was red wine on their breath, and they made you feel safe when they lifted you off the boat and onto the docks before they cast off into the open sea. They were very real.

At the same time, certain things in the movies I watched while growing up began to strike me as increasingly unreal. For instance, I'd never been to New York, but I found it unlikely that you could pull up in front of the Waldorf Astoria at any hour of the day or night and find a parking space; I would get faintly indignant that no one waited for change when they paid a check in a restaurant, I found it hard to swallow that every married couple slept in twin beds, that the husband always wore pajamas and the wife always woke up without her lipstick smeared, I knew it was a flat-out lie when the movie was set in Los Angeles and the men wore hats and overcoats. This misrepresentation of native dress was a serious violation of reality. It rankled me the way James Fenimore Cooper's Indians rankled Mark Twain—when six of them jump out of a sapling barely six feet tall and somehow miss a barge 150 feet long passing beneath them at less than one mile

an hour. Moreover, these hats in L.A. weren't merely noted on the printed page; they were being shown on a huge screen, the offending item much larger than life. I'm sure I figured somewhere back then that sooner or later, when I grew up, I would try to do it differently. I'd make it "real." Particularly because I grew up in a place outsiders claimed was unreal, and because I looked at representations of that world onscreen that I thought were unreal, I suppose I saw movies as a way of redressing a wrong. I would use one illusion—movies—in order to make another illusion—Los Angeles—real.

But then why not address and redress these views of Los Angeles through novels and plays? Why choose screenwriting, so often spoken of as a collaborative business? In this context, *collaboration* is akin to what happened in occupied France, and *business* means that you sell whatever writing skills you have for whatever money you can get.

I guess it's like I said to my daughter, I really am stuck. There are no novels or plays I'm itching to write and there never have been. I love movies. I think movies best communicate whatever I have to say and show; or to put it another way, when what you want to show is what you have to say, you are pretty much stuck with movies as a way of saying it.

Consider this: In *Lawrence of Arabia*, Lawrence, in flowing white robes, sits on a truck in the middle of the desert giving a press conference. He's ten feet tall on the screen and overwhelmingly immaculate. He faces a grimy-looking reporter who scratches his beard and asks snidely, "Just what is it, Colonel Lawrence, that attracts you to the desert?" Lawrence glances distastefully at the dirty reporter and offers a three-word reply: "Because it's clean." It's not the text but the context that gives this reply its full force. Those three words in a novel or even on the stage would be mild and amusing at best, but on the screen the effect is as overwhelming as the figure of Lawrence and the desert looming behind him. Those three words *are* the scene. There is no speech, long or short, about Lawrence's need to seek remote places of the earth in order to avoid the corruption inevitably found in its more populated areas. Only a clean man, a dirty reporter, a big desert, and three little words—"Because it's clean."

It's a movie. What else do you need? □

ROBERT TOWNE wrote his first screenplay when he was twenty-two years old. His credits include *Chinatown*, *The Last Detail*, and *Shampoo*, among others. He directed *Persona*. Best from his own screenplay, and he is currently working on a screenplay with Warren Beatty.



# Truth, Illusion, and Very Good Insurance

"I'D LIKE TO THANK THE MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMY..." BY JOHN GREGORY DUNNE



Body language: Robert Duvall with the author and his wife, Joan Didion, on the set of *True Confessions*, 1980

**D**ID YOU EVER HAPPEN TO CATCH "KILL Me on July 20th"? An episode of *Kraft Suspense Theater*? In 1965, maybe '66? Jack Kelly starred? You may not have noticed, but I had the story credit. My first screen credit ever. Two point three seconds over Jack Kelly driving on a freeway—I timed it. Actually, I shared the credit with my wife. We worked as a screenwriting team then. Still do. "Kill Me on July 20th" was Kraft's title. Ours was "The

Life You Save May Be Your Own." Right, stolen from Flannery O'Connor. Although that wasn't Kraft's objection. Ours (or Flannery O'Connor's, just wasn't punchy enough. Here was the story Jack Kelly thinks he has only a short time to live because he has one of those weird and never named diseases people in the movies are always dying of. He hires someone to kill him (on July 20, of course) so that his wife and kids can get double indemnity on his life insurance. What happens next? You guessed it. Wrong diagnosis, mixed up X rays. Up yours, says the hit man. He wants his fee and he has no other hits planned for that twentieth of July. He also takes pride in his work.

Complications ensue.

Someone else wrote the teleplay, but the day the show went into production we got paid a thousand dollars for our four-page storyboard. If truth be told, we had actually concocted the story (written hardly seems the appropriate word) on spec several years earlier during an illicit (in the sense of premarital) Fourth of July weekend in a New York hotel, where we had gone because our apartment wasn't air-conditioned and the Hilton was. We sent the treatment to a story editor at Universal who judged it worthless but consigned it nevertheless to the limbo of someone's file cabinet, because no matter how negative their opinion may be, studios never throw anything out—on the not-unreasonable grounds that someday Sly Stallone might need a project. Then *Kraft Suspense Theater* got canceled, and its final episodes were resurrected from the files to save the expense of assigning and paying for—original material.

About that thousand-dollar fee: It accounted for two-and-a-half months' rent on a three-bedroom, three-bathroom house on fifty-six acres of Pacific beach front. The house had screen credits, too. *Chrysler Theatre*, *Tobruk*, *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, among others. To this day, the house has more screen credits than we do.

But has taken fewer meetings.

**T**HE INFINITIVE TO TAKE is the operative verb attached to Hollywood meetings, as in, "I'm taking a meeting with Lew and Sid Wednesday," and "fabulous" is how these meetings are invariably described, as in, "a really fabulous meeting with David Hoberman." I have never understood the origin of the verb or how it applies, although I have certain dark, functional thoughts on both counts, and to call any meeting fabulous, let alone one with a head of production, indicates the general crassitude in which most Hollywood business is conducted.

I took my first Hollywood meeting with a man named Collier Young. He had been a Dartmouth classmate of Nelson Rockefeller's, and indeed when Rockefeller married Mary Toddhunter Clark, Collier had been one of his ushers—or so he maintained, social history being one of those areas in Hollywood that it is better not to investigate too closely. David Begelman, after all, claimed to be a Yale man, and I suspect it was only with considerable forbearance that he left *Skull and Bones* off his curriculum vitae. Collier lived in a small, per-



fect jewel box atop the hills of Beverly, a place he called the Mouse House, and to the Mouse House he brought each of his four wives, numbers two and three of whom were Ida Lupino and Joan Fontaine, one Christmas, after his third divorce and before his fourth marriage, his card read simply "Christmas Greetings from the Mouse House—Former Home of Ida Lupino and Joan Fontaine."

By the time we met him, he had been in Hollywood for nearly forty years, first as an extra man (a high visibility and little-appreciated job category in the community, one that allowed those impoverished sophisticates so favored—usually Brits or Ivy League types who know what fork to use—to eat and fuck well above their means), then as an agent, a factotum for Sam Goldwyn, a producer of the earnest low-budget feature films Ida Lupino directed in the 1940s, and finally in the 1950s and early 1960s as a TV producer. Collie was always on the comic, which was part of his charm (he actually dressed up as Uncle Sam and presided over an annual Fourth of July party at the Mouse House), and when he called us he had just been fired from a hugely successful TV series he had created called *Ironsides*. We never knew why he had been canned, but his firing did not stop him from dining regularly at the home of Jules Stein, the chairman of MCA Universal, the production entity that had dismissed him from *Ironsides*, the odd habits of the extra man dying hard.

What Collie had was an idea, and what we had was what he liked to call "independence," which in translation meant that we were not members of the Writers Guild, meaning in turn that he did not have to pay us those minimums and benefits to which guild members were entitled. After the success of "Kill Me on July 20th," we had struck out trying to tree-lance ideas to *Bonanza* (and I bet you did not know that the basic script premise for every *Bonanza* episode was what its story editor called Break a leg at the Ponderosa, that being the gimmick to get a guest star onto the ranch and into the show), Ben Casey (Break a leg at the hospital), Dr. Kildare (ditto), and Mr. Novak (Break a leg at the high school). So when Collie whispered the magic words, "I see a major motion picture," we were ready, not knowing then as we do now that "major" was to motion picture as "fabulous" was to meeting.

His idea came from *Time* magazine, whose cover subject that week, Dr. Christian Barnard, had just performed the first successful heart transplant. I have long contended that at the heart of every movie is a story from either *Time* or *Newsweek*. What if, Collie said (and *what if* are the two words without which a story conference cannot proceed), Howard Hughes had a bad ticker, and either he or one of his more devious subordinates arranged for the murder of a healthy young man with a healthy young heart that could replace Howard Hughes's diseased pump? It sounded like a major motion picture to us, and we climbed aboard. What if the healthy young man were a former Olympic gold medal winner? A world-record holder in the 400-meter at the Sao Paulo Olympiad. Anchor of the gold-medal winning 800-meter relay team. Anton Polonsky? Tony to those who loved him, and who couldn't love the guy, the way he waved the flag at the closing ceremonies?

The what ifs multiplied. What if Tony had been the victim of a rare degenerative disease—something like the one Jack Kelly was supposed to have on "Kill Me on July 20th," that had left him a paraplegic, although his spirits never flagged ("No days at a sports dinner is complete without Tony Polonsky.") and his heart was that of a lion, or a two-time gold-medal winner? It was getting more major all the time. And what if when we

knock Tony off (an arranged automobile accident), the cardiovascular unit at the hospital where he was sent had been funded largely by Hollis Todd, our Howard Hughes surrogate? (I should mention here that Collie favored characters with last name first names, like his own, our secondary victim was called Crosby McCullen.) And if that were so, wouldn't the cardiovascular staff be in Hollis Todd's pocket? Except for Charles Everett, M.D., our hero?

Complications ensue.

The story sold. We wrote the screenplay and made fifty grand. A director was hired. He had made what he liked to call an existential western (an oxymoron that goes a long way toward explaining the decline of the western as an art form) and wanted to replace us with a writer who, he said, better understood the Nietzschean implications of the devil's bargain. Hollis Todd was prepared to make. With experience I was to learn that he was only talking the way directors talk, but on first exposure I wanted to kill him on July 20. Needless to say, the movie was never produced, but our treatment was novelized by another writer and it has since been published in seventeen languages, under the title *The Todd Dossier*. The author is listed as Collier Young.

Why not? I wish the jacket photo had shown Collie in his Uncle Sam suit.

As for *The Todd Dossier*, the plot was recently ripped off by a successful TV cop show.

Which made it into a minor motion picture.

With Nietzschean implications.

**W**ITH OUR EFF ON THE TODD Dossier, we were now officially screenwriters. Members of the Writers Guild of America West. We even had an agent. Who liked to take us to lunch at the Hilerest Country Club, where all the comics hung out, spritzing and tumbling at the huge round table in the bar where they met every day. Our agent actually introduced me to George Jessel. Who called me Jackie, as if I were an opening act in Vegas, and promised to send me promotional material about the George Jessel Memorial Forest. In Israel. The Jessel Memorial Forest, it turned out, was a cemetery. Right there at Hilerest I was being hustled for a burial plot. Just in case, when the time came, I might like to consider being planted in what the nuns in the parochial schools I attended as a child always called the Holy Land.

Even in those early days, I was concocting my basic speech, the one every screenwriter has secretly written at one time or another. The speech never shows up in a screenplay, and even if he has never actually written the words down, the screenwriter can still recite them verbatim. There are variations, of course, but essentially the speech begins like this: "I'd like to thank the members of the Academy..." Oh, yes, we all think we are going to win an Academy Award one day. Even for *The Todd Dossier* or "Kill Me on July 20th." We give a little laugh, and then in our mind's eye we heft the Oscar, and with a self-deprecatory smile, we say, "Wow, I didn't know it was so heavy." And then we pay tribute to our co-workers: "Dick and Sydney... and to Bob..." an all-purpose Bob, meaning De Niro, Redford, or Duval. "Can you imagine anyone saying the words any better?"

Music up. Every time I practice the speech in front of my bathroom mirror it brings tears.

**T**HE BASIC TRUTH ABOUT SCREENWRITING is that your screenplay is probably not going to get made. I'm not talking original spec screenplays, I'm talking about screenplays for which a studio has paid a writer to do. do is another operative verb; *write* seems to make movie executives nervous. A first draft. Every year studios put dozens of screenplays into development, of which only a fraction ever go before the cameras. My wife and I have written sixteen screenplays and only six have been made (and on only four have we received credit). Screenplays go unproduced for a variety of reasons, and being lousy is not necessarily one of them. They are too expensive or Paramount has a similar project in development or Bruce Willis dances you around for six months and then decides not to do it, leaving his taint on it, or the new management does not want to do the old management's leftovers, the reasons not to move a picture from development to go are infinite.

Here are a few reasons why screenwriters put up with this:

1. Very good money. It remains possible to make a handsome living writing unproduced scripts, or produced scripts on which another writer gets the credit. On a day-to-day basis, the industry runs less on the pictures it makes than on those it does not make, on the development deal that not only pays the producer a little something (walking around money, is how the producer thinks of this) and the writer a little something (paying the bills, is how the writer thinks of this) but also supports the typist, the Xerox, and not least the executive whose days are considered fruitful to the extent that they are scheduled with truly fabulous meetings on imaginary projects.

2. Very good health insurance. I've had open-heart surgery. Cost to me: zero.

3) The truly fabulous, in the root sense of the word, meetings.

**A** MEETING: NOT LONG AGO, WE WERE asked to rewrite a caper thriller about a bank robbery that takes place during a hurricane. (How the robbers knew exactly where and when the hurricane would hit was a plot point the script finessed.) We were told that what the producers wanted was a combination of *Key Largo* and *Die Hard*; we were to provide the *Key Largo* element. So we flew out to Los Angeles to meet the director, a young man who in only two previous films had bumped his price to \$3 million. There was the usual schmooze before we got around to talking about the script. The director drove a blood-red Ferrari, and he said that when he went to the clubs at night, looking for girls, he would never tell them he was a director, because then they would try to slip him a script. Well, what do you tell them you do? I asked. I tell them I'm a welder, he said. A welder with a Ferrari? I said. He just smiled; it was a plot point to himself.

Speaking of the script, how did he see the first act?

"Better whammies," he said. Whammies, we had been told, were special effects that killed a lot of people, and it was that sea-sick theory, formulated by a producer named Joe Silver and known as the Joe Silver Whammy Theory, that a whammy had to occur every ten minutes to keep the attention of the audience.

What, then, should we do about the second act?

"Second act, whammies mount up," the director said, picking up the telephone to call the set of the picture he was then shooting. The cameraman was having a problem. Missing the first whammy of the day. It was some time before the director got off the phone. I left his attention straying, but pressed on and the third act?

"All whammies."

"Whammies mount up," I later realized, is the contemporary equivalent of what we used to call "Complications ensue." We quit before we had a chance to write the *Key Largo* element.

Something good, however, came out of the project. For not writing the picture, our price jumped. You figure.

**N**OT EXACTLY A MEETING, BUT A meeting nevertheless: Warren Beatty calling at 2:00 in the morning.

"So I hear you're working on a Howard Hughes project." Notice no salutation, no identification. The fact that I might have been asleep (deep in REM, as it happened) seemed not to have crossed his mind. Or perhaps was the reason he called at 2:00 A.M. in the first place. Spend any time at a in Hollywood and you learn to ascribe demonic motives to Warren (and it's always "Warren," no matter how casual your acquaintanceship might actually be). I decided to play it cool.

"Warren?" I said.

"Interesting story," the voice said. Giving nothing away. Including his name. I knew Warren had been fiddling with a Howard Hughes picture for some time. To the point where he had even had photos of himself taken dressed the way Hughes dressed. Or so the word was. And in Hollywood, a ways go with the word.

"Well, actually, we're not so much interested in Howard Hughes *qua* Howard Hughes," I said. The upside of Warren is that he understands what *qua* means.

"Oh?"

"More in a Howard Hughes type," I said. The way Hollis Todd was a Howard Hughes type. In fact, Howard Hughes was of no interest to us. "We'd rather make up our own story." What the story was I have long forgotten, but I was not about to tell it to Warren Beatty at 2:00 in the morning.

A long silence. I had the impression that Warren had found out exactly what he wanted to know. He still had not acknowledged that he was Warren Beatty. "I'll be in touch," he said.

Over the next several years, we ran into Warren with some frequency, but we never again discussed Howard Hughes or even a Howard Hughes type.

What we usually discussed was the poetry of Carolyn Forché.

**L**AST ADVICE ABOUT SCREENWRITING: Always know who's fucking whom in the studio pecking order, literally and figuratively. Never take a meeting with someone's girlfriend who for her talents has just been promoted to vice-president, especially if you knew her before her eminence. If power corrupts, new power corrupts absolutely.

Finally, always have an out for that moment when you discern that a meeting is going badly. You always know. There are long silences, and no one meets your eye, nor do they ask if you want another Evian or discuss your availability. It is at this juncture that I look at my wife or she at me and one of us says, "White Christmas." Nothing to do with the holiday. It was the song Army disc jockeys played over the Armed Forces Radio Network in Saigon in April 1973, announcing to the few Americans left in Vietnam that it was time to bail out, the war was over.

P.S. I'm not in this to pass judgment, but writers who have worked for Disney (*moi et ma femme*) call it Mooschwitz. ☐

JOHN GREGORY DUNNE is a novelist and screenwriter whose credits include *A Star Is Born* and the screenplay of his novel *True Confessions*.







**O**UT OF THE BLUE ONE AFTERNOON, Bud Wiggins got a call from a Peter Dietrich, who said he was a writer for the Calendar section of the *Los Angeles Times*. He said he'd met Bobby Feld at a party and the agent had suggested he call Bud. He was doing an article on Hollywood writers and was talking to as many of them as he could.

Bud hadn't worked in more than a year. When he first signed with Bobby Feld five years before, things were different. Feld was lucky to get him. No fewer than five powerful agencies were bidding for Bud's services—then. He was wined and dined for three weeks. The movie he'd written was in production and he was so hot even the restaurant parking valets seemed to sense his charisma, flashing natty, kiss-ass smiles at him like he was Bill Murray. The various secretaries of the various agents treated him with coy respect, were *careful* around him, having clearly been briefed on the seriousness of the courtship. Bud joked freely with them, and the ease of his delivery, always full of innuendo, made him feel almost legendary. He was savvy, blessed, and full of health. He remembered one of the agents in Century City at the end of a superheated gang bang in which he was extolled by the entire staff of The Talent Agency with the felicity of a strong and sensitive lover. "They're going to start throwing money at you and they're never going to stop."

After the hubbub died down, Bud chose Feld. Bobby Feld was not considered to be as powerful as some of the others, but his reputation was that of a definite up-and-comer, a future power. He already had a stable of clients who were slightly outside of mainstream Hollywood, a respected, sexy group who wrote quirky, quality films and were sought out for interesting projects. None of them were hacks, though they weren't above doing a quick job for money—and Bobby Feld orchestrated both worlds for them well. It was a smart and unusual choice and no one faulted Bud. He placed the phone calls himself to the other agents, like a potentate, thanking them for their interest. Only one of them showed his fury.

But then Bud's movie did not appear. Rumors began. What was cut together by the drug-addicted director in a period of time that was protracted—even allowing for the postproduction "genius" syndrome—was a shambles. That the film had been specially screened and the audience response, scribbled obscenely on preview cards, had studio executives upchucking onto the raw silk of their Gianni Versace slacks. Bud treated the rumors cavalierly, wisely trying to dissociate himself from the ugliness. He

even told people he was trying to have his writing credit removed. For the first time in his life he acquired elan.

The film never even made it to cable. The script that had been passed from hand to hand like a black market curio, the script that agents gave their clients as a sample of what they should be

trying to imitate, a state-of-the-art ensemble of black comedy, bizarre characters, and raucous sex—well, it was very suspicious now. It was like something Klaus Kinski used to haul around the rain forest. And by that time, Bud had failed to hedge his bets. Out of hubris, he had refused several overall development deals while the getting was good. He'd settled instead for respectable rewrite work for respectable producers, none of which ever turned into anything. He was waiting for the movie to appear. He started not to care what kind of shape it was in—it was simply a rule of thumb that a writer's stock goes up tenfold when his film enters the theaters. Because he was lazy, he had not plodded forward and written a spec script as many of his friends had done—something entirely his own that could be auctioned off to the studios for a tremendous fee. So Bud Wiggins was overtaken on the track and lapped by his peers.

He hadn't spoken to Feld in months, and he thought that the agent giving his name to the

reporter was a healthy omen.

"Would you be available for lunch?" the reporter asked.

"Sure. When?"

"Wednesday?"

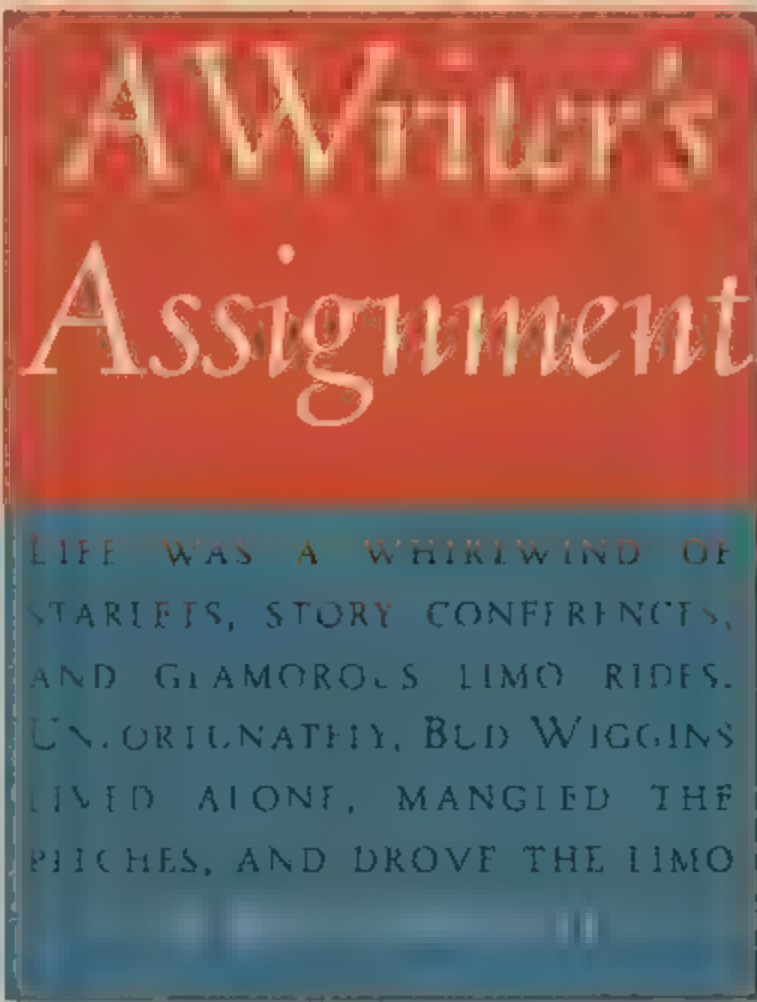
Bud had promised to work for a friend on Wednesday, driving a limousine. It was an easy way to pick up sixty or seventy dollars cash.

"I've got meetings all day Wednesday," he lied. "I'd say meet me out in Burbank but I may have to crawl all the way over to MGM right in the middle of the day. Is Thursday okay?"

"Thursday's great."

Bud felt the slow, ineluctable warmth of credibility return to his limbs. The old feeling again.

"Where can we go?" the reporter said. "You're in the West Hollywood area, aren't you?"



"I can meet you anywhere."  
"No, no, no," he said. He wanted to accommodate. How about the Old World?"

"Who's picking this up, the paper?"

"Absolutely. It's on Mrs. Chandler."

Bud laughed. He was back in the club, master and manipulator of his own destiny. A cocky whom again.

"Hugo's, at noon," he said confidently. Do you know where it is?"

"Sure! It's on Melrose, isn't it?"

"Santa Monica."

"Oh sure, Hugo's, of course. I've been there for breakfast. Wonderful."

"Thursday at noon."

"I'll make the reservation."

"See you then, Peter."

"Okay, Bud. And thanks."

**B**EFORE HE ENTERED THE Business, Bud had been a limousine driver for the Palms Hotel in Bel Air.

Most of the limos were owned by Chileans and Argentines who needed men to drive for them when they wanted to be home with their families or when they felt sick or disgusted or bitter from too much exposure to the rich. Bud liked the work.

On a good day he could clear a hundred dollars, most of it in cash. It gave him story ideas. In fact, this whole business with the reporter from the *Times* was beginning to give him ideas. Or, rather, the germ of a possible idea for a possible something, like a deaf-and-dumb little kernel; he turned it over in his mind five or six times a day, the hint of a notion, something he might tease and worry and pinch from a notion into an impulse, an impulse to an outline. He was going to turn everything to his advantage now. He'd allowed himself to be depressed for too long—suddenly, even awareness of his depression seemed encouraging. He would make his story-character depressed, and through the process of plot, his character would no longer be depressed, his character would become successful beyond anyone's waviest dreams. Like a miracle. And who better to enjoy the miracle of success than a protagonist who feels it's shut its door on him forever?

He wasn't sure how the newspaper would play a part in his story yet—that would come later, with the writing. He decided not to bother with a detailed outline. He hated working from outlines, it squelched his creativity. So Bud agreed with himself to spend the next few days subconsciously working on the outline for the Newspaper Story. He would tell no one about the saga of a depressed man who's maybe a reporter for a small-town paper. He'd make it into a soap opera—that would be his take. A soap opera like the old Sirk movies, something he could write in short, clear, lurid scenes. Very cinematic. No one would accuse his characters of being too talky again.

That evening, he got a call from Bobby Feld. Or rather, it was his secretary at first and she was cheery and polite, as if they'd never had differences. She put the agent on.

"Hey, big guy."

"Hi, Bobby."

"I got a call this morning—in fact, I've been trying to reach

you, I don't think your machine's been on—I got a call this morning from Joel Levitt. He's over at Universal. Evidently someone—and I can't think who right now, but it isn't important—someone gave him *Inappropriate Laughter* and he wants to meet with you."

Bud's stomach flipped over.

"That's my worst script."

"Now don't turn this into something negative. Evidently he liked it enough to want to meet with you on a project."

"I can't believe that. I told you never to send that script out."

"I didn't send it out, Mr. Temperamental Mr. Negative. Look, you haven't worked in about a thousand years and it looks like the ball's starting to roll again for you. So would you please not be a cunt?"

"What do you mean, the ball's starting to roll?"

"I've had a few people ask what you've been up to. You've been submitted for a couple of projects."

"Which ones? Who?"

"I can't tell you which ones. But you've been submitted. People still remember the movie you wrote and know it wasn't your fault. So cheer up, okay, big guy?"

"That reporter called me."

"What reporter?"

"The one you met at a party."

Bud heard a clicking on the phone that meant Feld was talking to his secretary and had moved a switch on the phone that would make it impossible for Bud to hear what he was saying, while giving the illusion that the agent was still listening to him. It clicked again and Feld said, "What? Oh, right. Nice guy."

"Well, thanks for giving him my number. I mean it might turn into something. Maybe a spec script."

"What do you mean? He just wants to talk to you. He works for a paper."

"I mean I have an idea to do a spec script about a reporter."

"Lot of those this year."

"But like a Douglas Sirk soap opera."

"Doesn't get me hard. But go for it, big guy. I gotta go; Cindy will give you the time."

The secretary told Bud that Joel Levitt wanted to meet with him on Thursday at two. It was about a rewrite. They would be messengered a script over. It was the first time anything had been messengered to Bud in a year and a half.

The limo job fell through so Bud decided to spend most of Wednesday reading the script and making notes in preparation for the meeting. The Beverly Hills Public Library made him feel scholarly and luxuriously valid. He imagined himself giving an interview years from now and remembering his time there, the years when the richness of the place girdled him, mothered him, nurtured him with its stoic approval.

The script was the usual outerspace comedy. Its basic premise was taking two hip alien teenagers and stranding them on Earth. They called it *Space-o's*. It was perfect for Bud because while the premise was a nice takeoff for his imagination, the writing was lackluster. It had some nice bits and was more structurally sound than it seemed, and already Bud began to think up little twists and hooks for the characters. He wouldn't have to do that much work. That was good, because lately it seemed very hard for him to concentrate—on anything, really. He'd buy a book and not read it, or begin an outline and leave it undone. He told himself that it was all because he lacked the discipline a job always provided. Bud Wiggins needed to work and be paid for his work—some writers were like that. His spirits were just too low when he



wasn't employed, and it affected his creative stamina. He made some notes and after about an hour went home and napped.

**B**UD WAS SITTING BY THE PAY phone in Hugo's thinking about his Newspaper Story when his thoughts were interrupted by a gentle-looking man with a soft blond beard. "Are you Bud Wiggins?"

Peter Dietrich introduced himself, they shook hands. The reporter was in his late twenties. The host showed them to their table.

"How did you become a reporter?" Bud began. The screenwriter was gracious and charming; years of meetings at the studios had taught him to disarm the opposition with questions of his own. The technique somehow made them feel on a creative par. The young reporter went through the usual personal history: Ivy League college, comes from wealth, finishing a novel.

The reporter then turned his attention completely to Bud. He got out a little note pad that was more an emblem of respect for the interviewee, as Bud interpreted it, than a useful tool. It legitimized them both. Bud talked about dropping out of Hollywood for a while because the town became "silly," and he had begun writing plays in New York. He needed to alibi all the fallow moments. The reporter asked if any had been produced, and Bud said yes, adding that they were all "laboratory" productions off Broadway, experimental. That they had helped him grow tremendously but he had tired of New York and had returned to Los Angeles, where he was currently finishing two spec screenplays. And did he tell him that he did his really important work at the Beverly Hills Public Library?

Halfway through lunch, Bud had a brilliant idea. He told the reporter that he happened to have a meeting at Universal Studios at two, and would he like to come along? Dietrich immediately agreed and could hardly contain his excitement at being able to do some real fieldwork. Bud knew that the serious writer part of the reporter was particularly interested. And Bud could kill two birds with one stone—not only would he come across as a dynamic, working writer in the *Times* profile but his stock would be mestimably raised in the eyes of the producer Joel Levitt. After all, here's a writer who's being tailed by a major newspaper for a day-in-the-life story, and he's got the chutzpah to bring the journalist to a meeting! Now, there's a guy with panache—let's give him a gig.

"You should try and write a script," Bud said as the reporter paid the check. Dietrich seemed to blush.

"I've been thinking about it," he said.

"It's easier than writing a novel," Bud added. "But maybe not."

The guard at the gate took forever to find Bud's drive-on. Dietrich was smiling vacantly and Bud got a sinking feeling. He wondered if Levitt's office had forgotten to leave him a pass.

"Bud Wiggins," he enunciated again, firmly.

"Relax." The guard was a sardonic, leather-skinned crack pot. "A guy goes to his shrink and says, 'Doc! I'm a tepee! I'm a wigwam! I'm a tepee! I'm a wigwam!'" He finally taped a pass to the windshield, then leaned over intimately to Bud. "The shrink says, 'Relax. You're two tents'."

He waved them through.

Bud wondered for a moment if he was doing the right thing. What if the plan backfired? The worst they could do, he figured, was make the reporter wait outside the room. Bud was suddenly calm now that the worst was all right. He became invigorated again and began to psych himself up, thinking about what he was going to say.

Bud and the reporter were drinking coffee out of china cups when the heavy walnut doors opened. It was Joel Levitt. He gestured for them to enter. He was about fifty, with silver hair and a deep tan. He looked dismayed at seeing a second person, then Bud saw instantly that he was the type of man who didn't surprise easily.

Bud took one look around the room and almost fainted. There were nine or ten people, all seated, their eyes trained on him. "This is worse than the sale at Maxfield's," Bud said, and he got a laugh, and the laughter helped push away the vertigo. He thought he was going to vomit. Levitt made a few perfunctory introductions that ended in Bud shaking hands with Billy Quintero, the famous star. Bud blanched, then recovered. "You look a lot like Bill Quintero," he joked. The star smiled and it was a nice smile; Quintero was always written up as a shy man. Bud liked him and found his own nervousness dissolving. The first few minutes of a meeting were crucial—if the chemistry was wrong, if the improper respect was shown, or there were too many interruptions or the wrong remark, it could have all the wrongness of a spookily recurring dream. He'd had that kind of meeting before and could tell when it went bad, because he would start to feel disembodied, like his soul had left and he was watching the meeting from the ceiling. He'd go numb and time would collapse so that no matter how long it was, the meeting seemed like twelve seconds of slow-moving color and face, vivid in its thereness but empty of tone or feeling. Like the endless thirty-second tapes on answering machines.

Bud introduced the reporter. Dietrich behaved just as Bud had hoped he would, knowing instinctively that it was not his place to say a word. The reporter had a look on his face of a man changing into a wolf, or a boxer on peyote—clearly exhilarated.

rated to be in the ring. This was good for Bud, because the reporter's primal association with him now would be the roar of the clique, the franchise of respect that's allotted to a writer like Bud Wiggins. Yes, his career was not where he had hoped. He'd had a film produced, a major film, and that it had not come out was not his fault. He had done his part. How many insignificant pictures had Billy Quintero worked on before he started to receive the recognition he deserved? How many off Broadway productions? How many Equity waivers? How many bars and restaurants? And look at Joel Levitt. He certainly wasn't born getting two hundred phone calls a day. He wasn't born with a Maserati Quattroporte and his own restaurant. Even his accountants took ads out in the trades, just thanking him for being alive. No, he was a schlep in a mail room—pick a mail room, any mail room, you better believe it. And he could be nothing tomorrow and he was smart enough to know it. Quintero knew it, they all knew it. They could be nothing tomorrow. So they had to search. Search all the time for the thing that would keep them rich, great, and known for the continuous right reasons, and their search invariably led them to...writers. If the writer had the hook, the take, the fix, then they would pave the streets with gold for him. Because they were not covetous of the fame or fortune of a writer.

"Have you read the script?" Levitt asked.

"Yeah," Bud said. His "yeah" was clinical, the perfect way to begin his respectful dissent. After all, no matter how bad the script was, there were many trail egos on the line. For all he knew, it could have been the idea of Joel Levitt's dying seven-year-old daughter to do a script about two teen aliens who run out of gas and get stranded on Earth while joyriding around the solar system. It could be that precious to him. Or maybe Quintero came up with it. He knew Quintero was there for a reason; he was obviously going to play one of the kids. But Quintero was already thirty-five years old—at least. True, he hadn't had a hit in two years, but now that Bud thought about it, Quintero hadn't even appeared in a film in that long. He was choosy, picking his shots well. And the studio could never force him into a room like this. He had to be really interested in the project. Bud remembered reading somewhere that Quintero wanted to do comedy, so suddenly everything made sense. Except for the fact that Quintero was thirty-something and the kids in the script were teenagers. Bud had to think fast on his feet; this was probably a test.

"I'm not so sure they should be teens," he said and tried to gauge the response.

"Go on," said Levitt.

"First of all"—and he looked straight at Billy Quintero—"I think the first-choice casting should be someone with real

range—someone like Dustin Hoffman." There was silence. Then effortlessly, with the timing of a Vegas comic, Bud said, "Just kidding, Billy." Everyone laughed—touché. While they continued to laugh, Bud said, "Quintero's getting nervous." He did a fair Rickles.

Bud took a deep breath. "We've seen the body-exchange stuff before," he went on confidently. No one could argue with that; he decided to play it out.

"Yeah, that was one of Billy's concerns," said the producer, Bingo.

"Still, it's been a while since *Big*. If it's handled right, it's something an audience always loves. So, I'd combine all that with the subplot about the guy who gets made into the pope."

"Combine it," Levitt echoed flatly.

"Right." Bud gauged the room—they were still listening. "The way it is now, the guy is made the pope by mistake. That just couldn't happen. I mean, when they pick the Dalai Lama, maybe. But the pope—it's a process, with the cardinals and the puffs of smoke."

Levitt straightened up like he'd slapped himself with a towel. "So, you'd have the guy from Newark wake up inside the pope's body?"

Bud nodded, an old safe-cracker passing on his secrets. "It's cleaner. Also, Jeremiah's too passive—which I don't particularly mind. It's just that there's a *Field of Dreams* element that needs to be drawn out—"

"I love *Fields of Dreams*," Levitt pronounced. Then, to Bud: "But Costner was passive. Or am I wrong?"

"He was more benign than passive," Bud said lucidly. "And he was the motor."

Suddenly, Levitt switched gears. "Bud—and I know this is one of those dumb questions, but hey, ask around, I'm a dumb producer. I think it has some veneration to it, so I'm

gonna ask it anyway. If one movie comes to mind for this project, a *flavor*, a *spirit*—more than one. Five, ten—I mean, if you could pick a movie, a *direction*. If it's a *Home Alone*, a *Pretty Woman*, a *Mad, Mad World*, if it's a *Parenthood*, whatever comes to mind. If it's a *French Lieutenant's Woman*..." Suddenly, Levitt looked blankly at someone on the couch. "Jesus, where did that come from? I know where—it's been on cable all week."

"Amazing movie," someone said respectfully. "Pinter."

"Are you kidding me?" Levitt yelled. "I fucking hate that! I go on live television, I cut his English head off and vomit down his neck!"

"The script is good," the same person said. "I had problems with the movie."

"I fuck Harold Pinter's ass with a bullwhip in front of his whole fucking family!" There was laughter from the group and





Levitt turned back to Bud. "So what do you think, for a spirit—" "I'd say *Field of Dreams*," he began, "and *It's a Wonderful Life*. Penny Marshall and Ron Howard and Rob Reiner, the Barry Levinson of *Diner*, *Broadway Danny Rose*... Look *Who's Talking*, but *smart*..." He wanted to stop but somehow couldn't find the way out. "*Dances with Wolves*... *Batman* and *Lubitsch*—"

Another one from the couch said, "Is that like *Batman* and *Robin*?" and there was laughter. Levitt indicated for Bud to continue. "The films of Preston Sturges—" "Who?" the producer grunted.

Quintero mercifully interrupted, saying they were getting off the point.

The rest of the meeting took place like a dream. Bud went on to change one of the characters to an age that Quintero could play, finessing it so it wouldn't seem like he was sucking up to him. He knew that the safest bet, the one that would make him look good, was to keep it simple. Give them just a few bits and let them marinate. Give them the feeling there's a hundred more where that came from but they're going to have to pay. Show them that the script was basically sound—that's what they wanted to hear anyway. Sometimes, if you played your cards right, they'd come away from a meeting thinking you were a genius for saying the script only needed one or two changes. Like the adman who was rewarded for coming up with the name for a Carnation "instant" breakfast. He called it Carnation Instant Breakfast.

So Bud's strategy was to go over it closely enough so they knew he had read it but not to tip his hand. After all, Levitt was gung ho and Quintero was in the room—how bad could they think it was? They couldn't be talking major revisions here, not with everyone champing at the bit. This was a picture as close to going into production as these people wanted—and Bud didn't want to rock the Quattroporte. He felt good as hired, anyway. If he didn't deliver them what they wanted today, it was clear that they liked him enough to give Bobby Feld a call and—at the very worst—tell him that it looked like they still wanted his boy but were a little concerned and would like him to come in just once more with a few more beats, blah, blah, blah. So Bud kept it simple and spent more of the time warming them up, exchanging gossip, rearranging gifts under the Christmas tree, so to speak. It was a tour de force.

"So those are basically my thoughts," Bud had decided to end the meeting. "Give me ten days—and you'll have a shooting script."

"One thing, Bud," Quintero offered. "Can you tell me how you work? What do you type on?"

"Selectric II—the best. Fuck word processors." His obscenity was acceptable; it was good to have an edge. He was appreciated and understood.

Two executive vice-presidents in charge of production in Yohji Yamamoto suits suddenly appeared at the door. Their lives were defined by secrets—they walked and talked and breathed secrets. They looked giddy, antsy, like satanic interns auditing their first murder spree. They seemed thrilled to meet Billy Quintero and interested to shake hands with Bud. Bud had actually had dealings with one of them in the early months of his old success.

What goes around, comes around, Bud thought.

"Before I forget," Bud said, grabbing everyone's attention. "If we keep the ghost of Freud, we can have Jeremiah say to him, 'Sigmund, I'm a tepee! I'm a wigwam!...'"

"THAT WAS AMAZING," THE reporter said on their way back to Hugo's, so Bud could get his car.

"Was it what you thought it would be like?"

"No way. It was heavy!"

"Newspaper business don't run like that, huh?" Bud was doing his Dean Martin.

"You were really funny."

"Yeah, well, I could go home and never hear from those guys," Bud lied. "That's the way the Business is."

The reporter thanked Bud for all his time and told him he'd be calling to tell him when the article would be coming out.

The next week was a week of rain. Bud had three days' work driving the limousine. There was still no word from his agent but that was fine—he felt good enough about it, that his patience was rooted and mature. He had only called Bobby Feld once to tell him how well things went at Joel Levitt's. "Wonderful!" the secretary said, and she truly sounded happy for him. Feld told Bud he would follow it up. "I told you the ball was rolling, Mr. Depression." He told the agent about Billy Quintero and the executive vice-presidents, and for the first time in years Feld seemed eager to listen. There was no clicking of the phone so he could have clandestine conversations—no hurry to get off, just a normal chat.

BUD WAS HANGING AROUND the garage of the Palm Hotel when the dispatcher told him that a limousine was dead and would he go and rescue the driver's clients at Chasen's.

Bud had never seen the streets so full of water and debris. The rain came down so heavily that when one did get glimpses of other drivers, they looked giddy and moonstruck, crazed children at millennium's end. As up as he felt, Bud was jolted by little charges of remorse that he couldn't hook up to anything, spasms of terror and regret, nostalgia and dread. He pushed the feelings from his mind.

When he pulled up to Chasen's, the driver of the dead limousine flagged him down and motioned him to remain in his car; he looked wild in the rain, aboriginal. The driver and the doorman then ferried the party of six across the wet sidewalk as if they were a contingent of holy men and put them in Bud's limo.

With horror, Bud realized who his drunk, wet passengers were: Billy Quintero and Joel Levitt. Bud recognized some of the other faces from the meeting, before he nudged the rearview mirror so that his face couldn't be glimpsed, he thought he saw one of the secretive vice-presidents. An unfamiliar crony got in front with Bud.

"Let's see, where we going? You want to get a drink somewhere, Billy? Meet some girls?"

"No, I'm going back to the hotel."

"The Bel Age, driver," said Levitt. "You know where the Bel Age is?"

Before Bud had to answer, the man from the front seat said, "You never told me what that picture was you're doing, Joel."

"I only talked about it for an hour and a half. Where the hell were you?"

"I told you, Meg Ryan got a hold of me and wouldn't let go."

"Meg Ryan, my ass."

"Well if you won't tell me, maybe Billy'll tell me," the man in the front seat went on.

"Billy don't feel like talking about it," Levitt said. Billy Quintero smiled his famous street-sphinx smile.

"Tell Max," said another voice. "Joel, it's too fucking funny the way you tell it. He told Eddie Murphy, at Dominick's."

Levitt brightened at the memory. "He had blood in his stool, he was laughing so hard. And you know what that nigger's laugh sounds like."

Someone said, "Jesus, Joel" in token outrage, and another voice muttered not to pay attention, the producer was drunk. Whatever he was, he was ready to tell his story.

"Okay. Billy and I are starting a picture together. From an idea by me and Billy." Billy Quintero cleared his throat comically. "Okay, from an idea by Billy and me. Is that better, wise guy?" Everyone laughed. "Kind of a *Tootsie*, except about a screenwriter. Billy's gonna play the screenwriter. Now, not only can this screenwriter not get arrested in this town, but he's a—what, Billy, what is he?"

"Schmuck," Billy Quintero answered, and everyone laughed the easy laugh of the sycophant who's heard something that's genuinely funny.

"Right," Levitt continued. "This screenwriter is a schmuck, with delusions of grandeur to boot. And he's *plotzing*."

"This thing is going to make a hundred million," said a putative vice-president.

"What's a hundred million?" the producer bitched. "The sequel to my daughter's nanny's *tuckus* made a hundred million. It's gonna make *four* hundred million. You know you really are stupid, Jonathan." The boys beat up on Levitt for a minute to get him back on the rail; the producer gripped Quintero's leg to get some control back and the star clocked it with a raised comic eyebrow, like Levitt was a fag. The others laughed but he was already too committed to his story to acknowledge it. "So you know what a maniac this guy is for research, don't you? So I talk to Bobby Feld, over at TTA. Bobby's great—he's coming on the rafting trip, by the way. We tell Bobby what kind of guy we're looking for and he sends out this putz."

"You mean, you take a meeting with a real writer," the voice continued, pausing melodramatically, "and he doesn't know Billy's watching him?"

"And does not know to this day," said Quintero, not without charm.

"We get him a script—"

"Like a decoy—some eight year old piece of garbage from the library—and ask him his opinion so Billy could see a guy like that pitch. And he says, the putz says, all he'd make were a few changes!"

"Gentlemen," he said, didn't he say? "Gentleman, you've got a shooting script!"

"No, he said, 'Give me three days—and you've got a hit movie!'"

"It was classic," said a voice that sounded like one of the producers.

"He's giving dissertations about structure," Levitt wheezed, "like he was Harold fucking Ramis!"

Suddenly, Quintero boomed, "I'm a tepee, I'm a wigwam!" The mob became quiet, startled by the star's sudden verbosity. It was an aberration that they finally decided not to register.

"This is marvelous," said the crony. "You have to put it in a

movie somewhere."

"I'm a tepee! I'm a wigwam!" Quintero croaked again, and this time, the men in back spontaneously joined in. The crony smiled, dismayed.

"I'm a tepee! I'm a wigwam! I'm a tepee! I'm a wigwam!" they crowed, Freemasons all.

"Relax," said the producer, holding an imaginary conductor's baton in the air. A cough welled up and he shuddered with its bewitchment, then brought the baton down with a flourish as the men chorused:

"You're two tents!"

The downpour dumped a bucket of rain onto the windshield as the producer's strangled cough erupted and filled the car with something akin to electronic noise.

A WEEK LATER BUD GOT A CALL from Peter Dietrich. He said that for reasons of space he had been forced to

reduce the entire day to include only the meet-

ing with Joel Levitt and Billy Quintero—his editor loved it. He told Bud that everyone in the serial was given pseudonyms, an editorial decision to avoid legal hassles. "So I guess you'll have to tell your Mom who's who," he joked.

Bud asked the reporter if he was still interested in writing scripts after having looked at the whole thing close up. "More than ever," he said. Then Bud ran his Newspaper Story by him in broad strokes and got some good feedback. The reporter seemed genuinely excited. Bud hinted he might want to collaborate on this one.

BUD WENT DOWN TO THE newsstand late at night to get the early morning edition of the *Times*. On the

front page, a banner read: HOLLYWOOD HI'S AND

LOWS, THIS WEEK IN CALENDAR! It was all

in red ink. He pulled out the section. There was a large pen-and-ink drawing of the gates of Universal Studios. The caption read: ABANDON HOPE ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE. There was some kind of logo incorporating a movie camera and dollar signs at the top of the page, then:

HOLLYWOOD HI'S AND LOWS:

PART I—AMBUSH!

BY PETER DIETRICH

(The following article is the first in a series of exclusive stories on Hollywood winners and losers. All names have been changed. —Ed.)

Bill Wogans was excited. His former agent had called him that morning with the news—they wanted to see him over at Universal. He wondered if it was a dream, and for good reason. It had been well over a year since the failed screenwriter... □

Formerly an obsequious limo driver, BRUCE WAGNER is now a working screenwriter, having collaborated on scenes from the *Class* struggle in Beverly Hills, among others. This story is from *Force Majeure*, published this summer by Random House, Inc.



**T**HINGS HAD BEEN UP AND DOWN FOR ETHAN WEISE, and it was hard knowing: Was the West Coast the best place? California certainly wasn't Wisconsin, where Ethan had grown up. And Los Angeles wasn't Detroit; it wasn't even New York, where he'd studied painting and made his first couple stabs. And his half-house in

Venice bore no resemblance to the house he and Suzanne had been caretakers of for two years, after art school, in Santa Fe. Things felt tricky. Felt, in fact, ungrounded.

His personal life, even, felt ungrounded. The Suzanne relationship grew more off than on the wall. On the other hand, he'd been in one group and two individual shows. He had a gallery. He'd sold to people with names. He'd been a "visual consultant" on a short feature by an American Film Institute directing fellow. And there'd been the call from Warren Beatty.

Still, Suzanne moved in; Suzanne moved out; Suzanne moved in again, she moved out. She'd moved out that morning for the third time! Before the call.

"Can you explain this to me, please?" he'd asked. She'd been wrestling her Suzanne-size duffel out the door.

"It feels wrong," she'd said.  
"I see. What feels wrong?" he'd said.

"The dust," she'd said. "Have you seen the dust in the light? When the sun hits it?"

"No. I'm sorry. I may have. I probably have. Tell me about it."

"It's orange."

"Right."

"And the floorboards are terrible!" she'd said.

"Well, then, you're wise to leave," Ethan had said, pissed. "Orange dust, terrible floorboards: I'd get the next plane, definitely, to Terre Haute."

"Don't be sarcastic," Suzanne had said.  
"I'm sorry," Ethan had said.

Suzanne was from Indiana. Sometimes that seemed the explanation. *This is Suzanne. She's from Indiana.* He'd met her in Santa Fe, though, and she'd seemed so sweet, so innocent. She even seemed to love him, most times. But she made contact with reality in a language Ethan had either forgotten or never learned. "I went up into the mountains and saw a bird," she'd say. "There are birds in Los Angeles," he'd say. "Not birds," she'd say, "not...birds." She'd wanted them to live in Montrose, Colorado, because she'd driven through once and had thought it beautiful.

So now Suzanne was out again. And here he was...in the dusty house with the terrible floorboards. She was gone. He'd stopped

asking where she might go, just hung in for her call. "I'm in Preston, Idaho, on a lake." Okay. "Are you jealous?" Should I be?

He'd imagine her at such times and paint her. Most of his work, in fact, during the last four years, was of motion: mobility, people moving. He'd done a whole series of hitchhikers. Another of people in isolated cafes...or sitting on oil drums wearing backpacks in far-off gas stations. He loved Edward Hopper. What Ethan wanted, in his own work, was to bring Hopper and all his people outside and into the light, make them sweat, make them really placeless, take their hotel rooms and train stations away, evict them, put them on the road. The series he was into, for the March show, was one of twenty to thirty aged backpackers living in city parks.

Then the call came from Warren Beatty.

He'd painted until about 10:00, then watched some basketball, then gone to bed, the bed smelling of Suzanne so that Ethan had at first felt angry, then alone. But he'd fallen asleep. And then, sometime after midnight, the phone had rung. He'd groped for it.

"Yeah?" he'd said.

"Ethan?" the voice had said.

"Yeah," Ethan had said.  
"This is Warren Beatty," the voice had said.

"Right," Ethan had said.  
"I was just sitting here with Emilio, and we were talking about your work. Emilio bought one of your paintings. The redhead? In the Levi's jacket? In the back of the pickup?"

Ethan slid awake.  
"... And we were just agreeing how perfect you'd be to direct this project."

"Which project?"  
"This project we're doing," the voice said.

Who was this? Ethan wondered.  
"Can I send the script over?"

"Sure," Ethan said. *Who the fuck was this?*

"Then...as soon as you get back to us. We can, you know,

hopefully, move."

"Right," Ethan said.

"I'll send it right over."

"Right."

"Be well."

He fell back to sleep. His front buzzer woke him. He got out of bed, looked through his bedroom front window. Parked in front of the house was a limousine. *Fuck!* he said. He threw a robe on and went to the door. A man with long sandy hair and a chauffeur's uniform stood holding an envelope. "Ethan Weise?" he said.

"Yeah?"  
"Warren Beatty sent this," he said. He held the envelope out; Ethan took it. "The number to get back... is on the script inside," the man said.

"Sure," Ethan said.

"Goodnight," the man said.

Ethan closed the door.

Ethan stood in his living room in the dark, his head clearing. He felt the envelope in his hand, opened it, shook the script out. The cover was leather; it felt heavy. Ethan could smell his oils, still damp in the adjoining studio room. He could hear the older Chicano couple in the other half of the house fighting again.

*You always out!*

*You always home!*

He went and sat on his couch, flipped on a lamp. The script's Leatherette cover was shell blue. Its title was *Hands On*...by someone named Keithly Pratt. On the lower right-hand corner, stamped, was: PROPERTY OF WARREN BEATTY/POSSIBLE PRODUCTIONS.

The call was real. What was going on? Why had he been sent the script? He was a painter, not a film director. His head felt like amphetamines. His phone rang.

"Hello?" he answered.

"Ethan, it's Warren," the voice said. "It's Warren again."

"Hi," Ethan said.

"You got the script," Beatty said.

"I did. Yeah," Ethan said.

"Just checking. Call me in the morning, okay?"

"Sure," Ethan said and hung up.

He stayed up and read. The script was 160 pages and terrible. It seemed like the pretentious philosophical psychosexual ramblings of the main character, who was probably the scriptwriter, a man in his early thirties named Parnell. Parnell visited his dying father. They argued. He slept with woman after woman in his hometown and abused them with self-pitying bullshit. He vaguely plotted the murder of his father's G.P., who'd possibly prescribed a wrong medication a year and a half earlier. He walked out of the room repeatedly on his crying mother. He berated his brother for passivity, slept with his brother's wife, of course abusing her with self-pitying bullshit. It was terrible! It was dreadful! It was advanced pretentious! Ethan's phone rang. It was 3:00 in the morning. His message came on...his tone: It was Warren Beatty, wondering whether Ethan might have stayed up to read the script and saying he'd check back later.

What would Ethan tell Warren Beatty? Jesus! Did Beatty have any idea how bad the script was? Maybe not—he'd bought it. Was Beatty planning to play the character, Parnell? Or was that Emilio? And was Emilio...Estevez? And so, then, what was their relationship? Wasn't Emilio Estevez the son of the other actor? Sheen? Martin Sheen? Or was that Charlie Sheen? Or was that both of them?

Ethan slept two hours. He got up, made coffee, drank cup after cup, reread the script, wished that Suzanne were there so that they could talk, so that he might use her as some kind of sounding board. Had Warren Beatty said...had he been interested in Ethan to direct the film? A feature film? Well, yeah, okay: He'd advised *usually* on one student film, but... Still, he'd seemed, Warren Beatty had seemed, pretty clear that Ethan...basically...was a painter.

Again the phone rang. Again Ethan made no move. Again it was Warren Beatty. Now it was just after 10:30. Warren Beatty said: "We'd really like to put this together. Call."

Ethan read the script one more time. It got worse. He called Warren Beatty. "So are you on board?" Warren Beatty said.

"I have reservations," Ethan said.

"Of course! Of course! That's why I sent it over! Jesus Christ, man!" Warren Beatty suggested that they get together for dinner that night at Mason's, on San Vicente Boulevard in Brentwood, at 9:00 and "go beyond their differences."

Ethan said okay.

He dressed three times, each a different image, each time hating his look more. What would Suzanne think?

When he got in his car, he found some drunk had heaved in it. He washed it out with dishwasher soap and warm water, but it still reeked. He drove the Ventura Freeway with all the windows open and got to Mason's late. Warren Beatty was there. And Emilio Estevez and Rosanna Arquette and a blonde Ethan didn't recognize. Mason's was filled with faces. There were so many faces from movies that they blurred and tuted.

**E**THAN INTRODUCED HIMSELF.

Everyone introduced themselves back.

The blonde's name was Headley Brent; she'd just been in a slasher movie that Ethan didn't get the name of. "I love your work," she said. "Do you do commissions?"

"I have...occasionally," Ethan said.

"Could you do me...hitchhiking...outside Barstow...in the nude?" she asked.

Anjelica Huston came over, gave Warren Beatty an open-mouthed kiss, they both laughed. "Me too?" Rosanna Arquette said. "Why not?" Anjelica Huston said and did it. "Gross!" Headley Brent said, and everyone laughed.

"Order the shark!" Warren Beatty told Ethan.

He did. He still had the script in his hand. He set it under his chair. Emilio Estevez poured him some wine. "So are we doing this?" Emilio Estevez asked.

Ethan watched Anjelica Huston leave and Cyndi Lauper arrive. Warren Beatty put a hand on Cyndi Lauper's thigh until she slapped it away and they both laughed. "Will you call me sometime?" Cyndi Lauper said to Rosanna Arquette. And Rosanna Arquette said she would. "Yeah...you say that...but you never do," Cyndi Lauper said. "Hey, I will," Rosanna Arquette said, "okay?" and Cyndi Lauper left. Everybody drank wine and talked about agents. The words *asshole* and *sleazebag* were everywhere. Something was happening under the table between Warren Beatty and Headley Brent. Ethan's shark arrived.

"We've got to be somewhere," Warren Beatty said, rising, grabbing Headley Brent's hand. "So you think it's possible?" he asked Ethan.





"It's pretty overwritten," Ethan said.  
 "Hey. You think that piece of shit's overwritten *now*...you should've seen it when I first optioned it. 217 pages! I'll talk to you in the morning," Warren Beatty left.  
 "He loves your work!" Rosanna Arquette said.  
 "I'm a painter," Ethan said.  
 "That's what she means," Emilio Estevez said.  
 "But he was talking about my *directing*," Ethan retrieved the script from under his chair and waved it.  
 "You have a brilliant eye," Rosanna Arquette said. "That's what matters."  
 "Warren went out today...to Kondell's...to your gallery...and bought three paintings," Emilio Estevez said.  
 "We have to be going," Rosanna Arquette said. She kissed him on the side of his face. The kiss was wet.  
 "Right," Ethan said. "Take care."  
 Emilio Estevez put his hand up for a high five. "Do this project," he told Ethan, standing. "I'm serious. Do it. It can be fucking great."  
 "I'm—"  
 "I know what you're going to say!" Emilio Estevez said.  
 "What am I going to say?" Ethan said.  
 "Say it."  
 "I'm thinking."  
 "Exactly!"  
 "I'm thinking about it," Ethan said.  
 "Exactly!" Rosanna Arquette and Emilio Estevez smiled at each other. Ethan watched them go. A beautiful black-haired woman in a sheer blouse, no bra, came over. She sat down.  
 "What're you eating?" she said.  
 "Shark," Ethan said.  
 "I have a taste?" she said.  
 Ethan gave her a taste.  
 "Are you somebody?" she asked him.

**E**ARLY NEXT MORNING, ETHAN called Suzanne's home in Indiana to check whether her parents had heard anything. Was she there? They hadn't; she wasn't. Just before noon, Warren Beatty called again. He was in New York. "I've got a suite at the Ritz Carlton," he told Ethan. "I've called Frank Pierson, who did *Presumed Innocent*. Just did *Ain't That America*. It's not out yet, but...I want the two of you to do whatever you have to to get this dog in shape. I'm sending the plane tickets by messenger. They'll be right over."  
 "Thanks for the dinner," Ethan said.  
 "Is round-trip first class all right?" Warren Beatty said.  
 "It's—"  
 "Buddy, please. Come on, I'm in a hurry."  
 "It's fine."  
 "So. You're aboard?"  
 "I'll..."  
 "Hey, come on, don't bullshit me. Are you on board or not?"  
 "I'll do what I can...to help," Ethan said, feeling loony, not sure precisely where his words came from.  
 "Great," Warren Beatty said. "That's perfect. I'm a happy man. I'll probably see you tomorrow."  
 "Yeah," Ethan said. He set the phone down. He stared off across the small living room. Some frangible object crashed

against the common wall and voices rose in Chicano. The noon sun slanted in through the high windows. It looked orange.  
 He packed his bags and waited for his plane ticket. While he waited, he wrote a letter, in the event that Suzanne might return while he was away.

Dear Suz:

A curious thing. I guess an opportunity. Warren Beatty asked me to direct a film. To star, I guess, Emilio Estevez. The script's not great. It needs work. Emilio had bought one of my paintings...and Warren saw it and bought three of his own. I guess they liked the feel, or images, or. I don't know, visual sense or something. At any rate, I'll be at the Ritz Carlton, in New York, for an indefinite time, with Frank Pierson, who wrote *Presumed Innocent*. He also just did *Ain't That America*. I don't think it's out yet. But, we're going to work on the script. So if you find this call me at the Ritz. I always miss you when you leave. I'm always happy when you come back.  
 Love, E.

When Ethan finished the letter, he ran it upstairs and set it in the middle of their bed...then stared out his window to where the street came and went, mostly with fringe people. He went downstairs. He paced. He went into his studio and eyeballed the unfinished canvas blocked in; half-painted a guy in a down vest, ripped Levi's, red bandanna around his head, backpack, bedroll, standing under a viaduct in some city. What was this whole thing Ethan had with motion?

Ethan waited the afternoon. No tickets came. He called Warren Beatty's number and got someone who said *Mr. Beatty would return the call as soon as he could*. "Just tell him...I may have been confused as to when to expect the tickets," Ethan said. The person said she would.

Ethan waited another hour. He called out for Chinese. He poured some tequila over ice. No one called. No one called all night. No one called the next day. No one called the day after that. No one called all week. He kept calling Warren Beatty's number and leaving messages. The woman who took the calls was always polite and nice. It was hard to paint. Annette from his gallery called to tell him she'd had a run on his work. When would he have more? "I think it's Warren Beatty," he told her.

"Well, there was somebody in a chauffeur's uniform who bought three," she said. "And then Frank Pierson bought one." Ethan said he'd get work over as soon as he could.

Christine Lahti called. She said Warren was going crazy with some personal things but hadn't forgotten about him or about the tickets. "He says: *just hang on*," she told him and then asked whether he was hungry. It was 10:00 at night.

"I'm not *unhungry*," Ethan said.

Christine Lahti told him she was starved, that she really shouldn't, because she started shooting in two weeks, but she'd love some calamari pasta: Would he meet her at Matsuhisa, on La Cienega? He said okay. They met. She was casual. He was overdressed. She was wearing dark glasses with a scarf over her head. "It's my disguise," she told him. "It's my peasant look." They had the calamari pasta and a really nice Pinot Grigio. Ethan asked Christine Lahti what she knew about the project. "I know it's on," she told him, "that's all. Your paintings are incredible." He thanked her. Randy Quaid came over and asked Christine Lahti if she'd seen Paulina Porizkova. "She always gets the tuck ng restaurants mixed up!" he said. "Drives me fucking crazy!" He shook hands with Ethan. When he left the table, Christine Lahti started



crying. "What?" Ethan said. "What? What is it?"

Christine Lahti said that it was nothing. It was just...a thing. It was an old thing having to do with Randy Quaid. She didn't want to talk about it, and she was sorry.

**T**HE NEXT DAY, SUZANNE CALLED and said she was in Moab, Utah. "It's incredible," she said. "It's really beautiful. It's the most beautiful place I've ever been." Ethan considered telling her about the Warren Beatty project but decided against it. "Come back," he said.

"Do what?" she said.

"Come back," he said.

"To what?" she said.

"To me," he said.

"I feel you left me...spiritually," she told him.

He didn't have a real way to argue. She asked him to come to Moab. He said he couldn't just then. She asked why. He said it was difficult to explain. She said the rock was orange there. He told her she'd said the dust was orange in their half-house. What was this thing she had with orange? She told him he didn't use enough of it in his work...and when he did, it was wrong. She quoted Rilke to him: *Dance the orange!* What the fuck was that all about?

They hung up. Ethan took his shirt off and lay down on the floor. He fell asleep and dreamed he'd gone to Moab, and the two of them, Suzanne and he, were on big rocks, these huge sandstone rocks and in this place she called the Devil's Garden. The dream was amazingly sexual. He was crazy in love with Suzanne, just wanted her like a lunatic. And everything was very wet and viscous and, it seemed, drenched in fruit. And a lot of sun! When he woke, Ethan saw that he had *burned* his shoulders and face, probably from the carpet.

**W**ARREN BEATTY FINALLY called, apologized, said someone close had been picked up two weeks before at Studio City on a sodomy charge and *it had been a mess*. Ethan should be patient. Frank Pierson also had a crisis. Things sometimes took time. Would he come over to Warren's that night? Warren had a surprise for him.

"What time?" Ethan asked.

"Any time," Warren Beatty said, "come after one."

"Where do I go?" Ethan said. "How do I get there?"

"I'll send somebody over," Warren Beatty said.

Just before 2:00, a white limo pulled up. The driver was silver-haired and pockmarked and said he'd had trouble finding Ethan's house. He didn't get many occasions in that neighborhood. Ethan had treated himself, shopped. He'd put on soft Levi's, a cashmere shirt, and a light tweed jacket. He didn't smoke; still, he bummed one from the driver and smoked it on the way.

Warren Beatty had obviously raided the Kondell Gallery. He'd taken all the furniture from one immense room and was having a *showing* of Ethan's work. Annette Kondell, looking happier than Ethan had ever seen her, wearing something pieced out of angora and silk, her hair metallic and exploded, rushed up. "Isn't this exciting?" she said. "Isn't this incredible! We've sold everything!"

"Surprise," Warren Beatty said.

"Surprise!" all sorts of people said—Elizabeth McGovern, Kevin Bacon, Meg Ryan, Teri Garr. River Phoenix was there. Julia Roberts, who seemed pissed off and just sat, staring out of a glass wall toward the lit pool. John Cougar-Mellencamp loved Ethan's work. Most of the Dead were there. People were pretty stoned. Annette offered him a line. He turned her down. He met people. Two producers named Roth. Ridley Scott, the director, who'd bought one of the paintings and loved it. Michael J. Fox, who asked him if he was coming out with anything. Ethan said no. "Well, I love your work anyway," Michael J. Fox said. "Which work?" Ethan asked him.

Ethan circulated. A movie was being screened in Warren Beatty's theater. Christine Lahti pulled him aside. He thanked her for the calamari pasta. She said, "Can we talk?" and pulled him outside, where she told him about a crisis she was having with James Woods. She cried and raved about Phoebe Cates, who she said was the person responsible. She began heaving with sobs. "Christine..." Ethan said.

"Christine...hey!..." Ethan didn't know what to do. He took hold, held her, but Christine Lahti started biting his shoulder through the light tweed and cashmere. "Take me home?" she said. He had no car, he said, and she just walked off, leaving him.

He went back inside. Jodie Foster found him. "First: I bought one of your paintings," she said. "I love your work, but that isn't what we need to talk about. What we need to talk about right now, is: I hope you didn't believe anything Christine just told you. She lies. It's pathological. She wouldn't know the truth if it went down on her. I'm sure you've read about it." Ethan said he hadn't. Jodie Foster said it was in all the *sheets*. "So you're going to start directing," Jodie Foster said. Ethan said he guessed so. She wondered: What made him think he had any talent? He said: "I'm stumped. You tell me." She walked off.

Tom Hanks and Bill Murray were doing a vaudeville bit in the kitchen; George Segal was playing banjo. Ethan found Warren Beatty and asked about a ride home. "I'm insulted!" Warren



Beatty said, "I set up a surprise party. and what do you do?" Then he laughed. He said: "Air tickets tomorrow!" but told Ethan he'd switched from the Ritz Carlton to a house in Key West. "Fully staffed," he said. "You'll get much more done." Phoebe Cates was pulling on Warren Beatty's arm. "C'mon...c'mon," she was saying. "You promised!" Before Warren Beatty got pulled away, he told Ethan he'd gotten Monte Merrick instead of Frank Pierson to work with. "Frank's up to his ass," he said. "Monte did *Alive*, and he's been asked, possibly, for a polish on Ollie Stone's *Demolished Man*, which hasn't been produced, but will be absolutely fucking amazing. I thought about Judy Rascoe, who did *Havana*, but she's a woman—right? So..." He threw Ethan some car keys. "It's the dark blue XL...by the tennis courts," he said.

Ethan wandered around until he found the XL. As he was backing around, a woman in a black off-the-shoulder dress and too much jewelry ran across the lawn. She was barefoot. "Wait! Wait!" she yelled. "Can you take me home?" She introduced herself as Elena Cantata. "I was introduced in *Spike of Bensonhurst*," she said. Ethan apologized. He wasn't familiar.

"I've seen you," Elena Cantata said.

"Where?" Ethan said.

"Inside," she said. She said she lived in Santa Monica, so did he want to go to Opera first, she'd heard it was open all night. Ethan said he was tired and didn't think so. another time. Elena Cantata said that one of the Roths had been trying to get in her pants all night, that Daphne Zuniga of *all people* had put a move on her, that she was supposed to have left with Tom Berenger but that he was fucking Kim Basinger or maybe it was Julianne Phillips in some coat closet though maybe, actually, it was Kevin Bacon with Julianne Phillips or Kim Basinger...maybe Tom Berenger had gone home, maybe it just *seemed* like Tom Berenger and Kim Basinger were in the coat closet.

"Maybe it just *seemed* like a coat closet," Ethan said.

"But Berenger/Basinger! Can you believe that?" the girl, Elena Cantata, said.

Elena Cantata lived in a small beach house. "I'm renting," she said. She asked Ethan to walk her to the door. She said she had agoraphobia and freaked out between the circle drive and the front unless someone was with her. And then she asked him in. He said no, but she said she had claustrophobia, "or *darkophobia* or *something*. I go crazy until I turn on the lights," she said. Inside she left the lights off and kept saying: "Just a minute...just a minute" and fumbling with her purse. Finally she grabbed Ethan and pulled his head down and kissed him, nearly putting her whole head inside. He felt something sipped under his tongue by *her* tongue, felt the thing, *whatever*, dissolve, nearly choked, swallowed. Then *something* happened. His head was so ripe he couldn't tell. It was sex or *like* sex or like a *film* of sex: all full of glide and music and airbrush and dissolve. When Ethan woke up, he was in a hammock outside on the redwood deck and whatever-her-name-was was inside on the couch. He found his clothes, Warren Beatty's car keys, and drove home.

**S**UZANNE HAD ARRIVED. THE sun was just hitting the rooftops. Suzanne asked where he'd been. He said: Would she let him get some sleep, because she wouldn't believe anything he might say and he was about

to become a zombie. She asked "Are you seeing someone else?" He said he was seeing everyone else but he would tell her about it. "Whose car is that?" Suzanne asked.

Ethan said, "Sleep with me. Stay with me while I sleep. Please." He slept until 5:00 that afternoon. Suzanne had gone to the Oriental market and made a wonderful brown-rice-and-totu salad. She brought it to him on a tray in bed.

"Did some tickets arrive?" he asked. "Some airline tickets? To Key West?"

"Nothing arrived," she said. "Just me. I arrived. Did you remember that?"

"I did," Ethan said.

"Oh...except someone came and drove away in that car," she said.

Ethan said it wasn't his car anyway; it was Warren Beatty's. "What did you do with the dust?" Suzanne asked. He said,

"What do you mean?"

She said, "It's silver."

He told her the whole story about Warren Beatty and the Warren Beatty project. Suzanne said it was interesting. He told her if Christine Lahti called to just say he'd gone out of town. She asked: What was he going to do now that he didn't have any paintings left? He said: He would have to deal with that eventually. She asked: "What if this is *eventually*?" I think *most* moments are *eventually*," she said. "I think our time in the Devil's Garden was *eventually*."

"Excuse me?" Ethan said.

"Ethan?" Suzanne said.

"Excuse me 'our time in the Devil's Garden'?"

"Yes."

"But that was a *dream*," he said.

"Perhaps. For you," she said. "I think right now is *eventually*. Look out front!" He looked out front and saw a U-Haul. "Everything that I own is in that U-Haul," Suzanne said. "I've been packing while you've been asleep. Now it's your turn...or it isn't," she said. "You decide."

Ethan said he would have to wait at least until he saw how things were going to turn out with Warren Beatty.

"That's fine," Suzanne said. "That's your choice." She spooned another bite of rice-totu into his mouth, kissed him on both eyes, took her purse, and left. Ethan heard an engine start, jumped up, and looked out to see the U-Haul van heading up his street. He threw the window open. "Wait," he yelled.

**E**THAN KEPT RUNNING INTO people...different places. He ran into Teri Garr, at lunch, one day at Tuttobene. She was very nice. "You okay?" she asked. He said fine. She said, "You look blue." He said: "That happens."

She said, "How's your work coming?" He said it was in transition. He told her he'd moved to Topanga Canyon and asked if she ever saw Warren. "Everybody sees everybody," Teri Garr said. "That's the business. And when you can't find people to see you *paint them in*, for godsakes!" She laughed.

He kept calling Warren Beatty and getting the nice woman. Getting several nice women, actually. But Warren Beatty never called back. □

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**P**AT HOBBY COULD ALWAYS GET ON THE LOT, he had worked there fifteen years on and off—chiefly off during the past five—and most of the studio police knew him. If tough customers on watch asked to see his studio card, he could get in by phoning Lou, the bookie. For Lou also, the studio had been home for many years.

Pat was forty-nine. He was a writer, but he had never written much, nor even read all the "originals" he worked from, because it made his head bang to read much. But the good old silent days you got somebody's plot and a smart secretary and gulped benzadrine "structure" at her six or eight hours every week. The director took care of the gags. After talkies came he always teamed up with some man who wrote dialogue. Some young man who liked to work.

"I've got a list of credits second to none," he told Jack Berners. "All I need is an idea and to work with somebody who isn't all wet."

He had buttonholed Jack outside the production office as Jack was going to lunch and they walked together in the direction of the commissary.

"You bring me an idea," said Jack Berners. "Things are tight. We can't put a man on salary unless he's got an idea."

"How can you get ideas off salary?" Pat demanded—then he added hastily "Anyhow, I got the germ of an idea that I could be telling you all about at lunch."

Something might come to him at lunch. There was Baer's notion about the boy scout. But Jack said cheerfully,

"I've got a date for lunch, Pat. Write it out and send it around, eh?"

He felt cruel because he knew Pat couldn't write anything out but he was having story trouble himself.

The war had just broken out and every producer on the lot wanted to end their current stories with the hero going to war. And Jack Berners felt he had thought of that first for his production.

"So write it out, eh?"

When Pat didn't answer Jack looked at him—he saw a sort of whipped misery in Pat's eye that reminded him of his own father. Pat had been in the money before Jack was out of college—with three cars and a chicken over every garage. Now his clothes looked as if he'd been standing at Hollywood and Vine for three years.

"Scout around and talk to some of the writers on the lot," he said. "If you can get one of them interested in your idea, bring him up to see me."

"I hate to give an idea without money on the line," Pat brooded pessimistically. "These young squirts'll lift the shirt off your back."

They had reached the commissary door.

"Good luck, Pat. Anyhow we're not in Poland."

Good you're not, said Pat under his breath. They'd slit your gizzard.

Now what to do? He went up and wandered along the cell-block of writers. Almost everyone had gone to lunch and those who were in he didn't know. Always there were more and more untamable faces. And he had thirty credits; he had been in the business, publicity and script writing, for twenty years.

The last door in the line belonged to a man he didn't like. But he wanted a place to sit a minute so with a knock he pushed it open. The man wasn't there—only a very pretty, frail-looking girl sat reading a book.

"I think he's left Hollywood," she said in answer to his question. "They gave me his office but they forgot to put up my name."

"You a writer?" Pat asked in surprise.

"I work at it."

"You ought to get 'em to give you a test."

"No, I like writing."

"What's that you're reading?"

She showed him.

"Let me give you a tip," he said. "That's not the way to get the guts out of a book."

"Oh."

"I've been here for years—I'm Pat Hobby—and I know. Give the book to four of your friends to read it. Get them to tell you what stuck in their minds. Write it down and you've got a picture, see?"

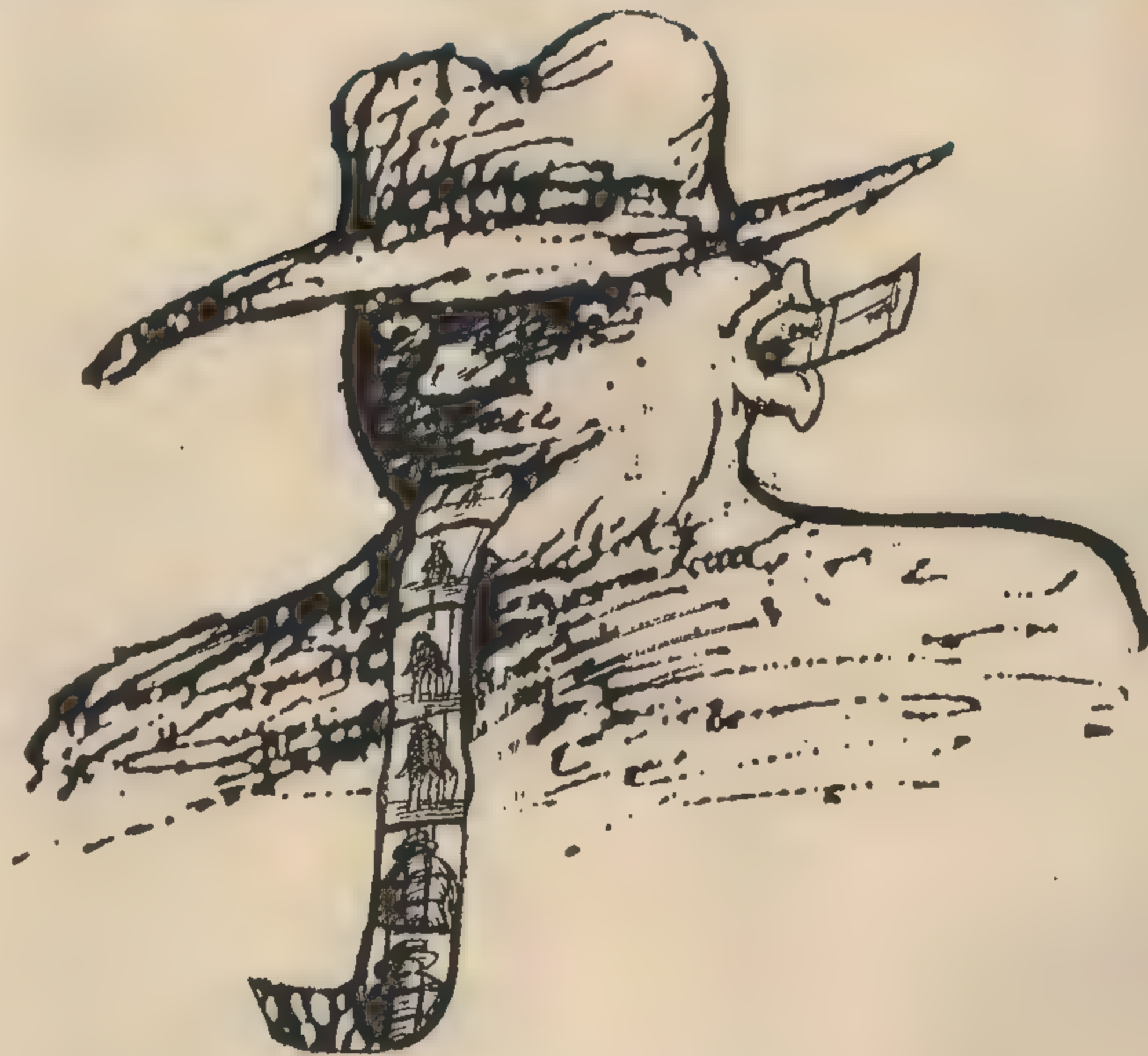
The girl smiled.

"Well, that's very, very original advice, Mr. Hobby."

"Pat Hobby," he said. "Can I wait here a minute? Man I came to see is at lunch."

## THE LAST A MINUTE THE WAY

IN THIS STORY, ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY ESQUIRE IN 1942, THE DOWN AND OUT PAT HOBBY IS COVERING ONE OF HOLLYWOOD'S MOST ENDURING LESSONS. WHY HAVE AN IDEA WHEN YOU CAN STEAL ONE?





He sat down across from her and picked up a copy of a photo magazine.

"Oh, just let me mark that," she said quickly.

He looked at the page which she checked. It showed paintings being boxed and carted away to safety from an art gallery in Europe.

"How'll you use it?" he said.

"Well, I thought it would be dramatic if there was an old man around while they were packing the pictures. A poor old man, trying to get a job helping them. But they can't use him—he's in the way—not even good cannon fodder. They want strong, young people in the world. And it turns out he's the man who painted the pictures many years ago."

Pat considered.

"It's good but I don't get it," he said.

"Oh, it's nothing, a short-short maybe."

"Got any good picture ideas? I'm in with all the markets here."

"I'm under contract."

"Use another name."

Her phone rang.

"Yes, this is Pricilla Smith," the girl said.

After a minute she turned to Pat.

"Will you excuse me? This is a private call."

He got it and walked out and along the corridor. Finding an office with no name on it, he went in and fell asleep on the couch.

**L**ATE THAT AFTERNOON HE returned to Jack Berners's waiting rooms. He had an idea about a man who meets a girl in an office and he thinks she's a stenographer but she turns out to be a writer. He engages her as a stenographer, though, and they start for the South Seas. It was a beginning, it was something to tell Jack, he thought—and picturing Pricilla Smith, he refurbished some old business he hadn't seen used for years.

He became quite excited about it—felt quite young for a moment—and walked up and down the waiting room, mentally rehearsing the first sequence. "So here we have a situation like *It Happened One Night*—only new. I see Hedy Lamarr—"

Oh, he knew how to talk to these boys if he could get to them, with something to say.

"Mr. Berners still busy?" he asked for the fifth time.

"Oh yes, Mr. Hobby. Mr. Bill Costello and Mr. Bach are in there."

He thought quickly. It was half past five. In the old days he had just busted in sometimes and sold an idea, an idea good for a couple of grand because it was just the moment when they were very tired of what they were doing at present.

He walked innocently out and to another door in the hall. He knew it led through a bathroom right in to Jack Berners's office. Drawing a quick breath he plunged.

"So that's the notion," he concluded after five minutes. "It's just a flash—nothing really worked out, but you could give me an office and a girl and I could have something on paper for you in three days."

Berners, Costello, and Bach did not even have to look at each other. Berners spoke for them all as he said firmly and gently:

"That's no idea, Pat. I can't put you on salary for that."

"Why don't you work it out further by yourself," suggested

Bill Costello. "And then let's see it. We're looking for ideas—especially about the war."

"A man can think better on salary," said Pat.

There was silence. Costello and Bach had drunk with him, played poker with him, gone to the races with him. They'd honestly be glad to see him placed.

"The war, eh," he said gloomily. "Everything is war now, no matter how many credits a man has. Do you know what it makes me think of? It makes me think of a well-known painter in the discard. It's wartime and he's useless—just a man in the way." He warmed to his conception of himself, "—but all the time they're carting away his own paintings as the most valuable thing worth saving. And they won't even let him help. That's what it reminds me of."

There was again silence for a moment.

"That isn't a bad idea," said Bach thoughtfully. He turned to the others. "You know? In itself?"

Bill Costello nodded.

"Not bad at all. And I know where we could spot it. Right at the end of the fourth sequence. We just change old Ames to a painter."

Presently they talked money.

"I'll give you two weeks on it," said Berners to Pat. "At two fifty."

"Two fifty!" objected Pat. "Say, there was one time you paid me ten times that!"

"That was ten years ago," Jack reminded him. "Sorry. Best we can do now."

"You make me feel like that old painter—"

"Don't oversell it," said Jack, rising and smiling. "You're on the payroll."

Pat went out with a quick step and confidence in his eyes. Half a grand—that would take the pressure off for a month and you could often stretch two weeks into three—sometimes four. He left the studio proudly through the front entrance, stopping at the liquor store for a half-pint to take back to his room.

By seven o'clock things were even better. Santa Anita tomorrow, if he could get an advance. And tonight—something festive ought to be done tonight. With a sudden rush of pleasure he went down to the phone in the lower hall, called the studio, and asked for Miss Pricilla Smith's number. He hadn't met anyone so pretty for years...

In her apartment Pricilla Smith spoke rather firmly into the phone.

"I'm awfully sorry," she said, "but I couldn't possibly... No—and I'm tied up all the rest of the week."

As she hung up, Jack Berners spoke from the couch.

"Who was it?"

"Oh, some man who came in the office," she laughed, "and told me never to read the story I was working on."

"Shall I believe you?"

"You certainly shall. I'll even think of his name in a minute. But first I want to tell you about an idea I had this morning. I was looking at a photo in a magazine where they were packing up some works of art in the Tate Gallery in London. And I thought—"

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD's *Pat Hobby* stories were first published by *Esquire* in 1940, with the last five printed after the author's death in December that year. Arnold Gingrich, *Esquire*'s founding editor, referred to them as Fitzgerald's "last word from his last home."

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# AT PLAY IN THE FIELDS OF HOLLYWOOD

Nearly every famous director, actor, and producer wanted a piece of Peter Matthiessen's celebrated novel—John Huston, Paul Newman, Milos Forman, David Bowie, Richard Gere. Twenty-five years later, it's about to hit the screen. Along the way, a studio collapsed, a rain forest disappeared, and a man was hung upside down by his testicles

BY CHIP BROWN

**L**ONG BEFORE PROFESSOR DARCU TRIED to slow the blue Morpho butterflies with rum, a Hollywood legend had formed around the by-line of Peter Matthiessen. The author's fame in the land of hyphenated job descriptions had little to do with the breadth of his résumé, the fact that he had co-founded *The Paris Review* a year out of college, or that as a self-taught naturalist he had produced a landmark survey of North American wildlife. Certainly in book circles Matthiessen was celebrated for his lyric disquisitions on musk-oxen and headhunters and sharks—and for the way he was able to blend advocacy and contemplation. Here was a writer worldly enough to run the gauntlet of libel court in defense of Native American causes, and yet of a metaphysical turn such that he could spend two decades studying for the Zen priesthood—an intensely focused author of twenty books whose laptop log-on message saluted the allure of aimlessness: "I have no destination," it said, "and so I am never lost."

In Hollywood Matthiessen's fame rested almost entirely on one book, his novel *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*. It was published in 1965. Some of the biggest names in the film world read it, or had mineral water with people they had paid to read it. Some of the biggest directors were going to translate it into film. Some of the biggest stars were going to personify its characters. Time after time it was announced as somebody's major motion picture. The hypothetical movie eventually eclipsed the actual novel, and all the names ran together in a vast blur of lawyers, agents, producers, writers, directors, and stars bidding for rights and vying for roles and clamoring at the gate for a percentage of the gross. In fact, until last spring, when cameras began to churn near the mouth of the Amazon and the circle was finally closed on twenty-five years of intrigue, machination, and neglect, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* was often referred to as the most famous unproduced film in Hollywood.



**P**ETER MATTHIESSEN WAS PART OF THE last prestige generation in American letters, that self-mythologizing postwar class who came of age when there was still a bona fide public for novels and a romantic grandeur in the idea of writing them. Matthiessen came out of prep schools and Yale with literary ambitions and a nineteenth-century wanderlust. He fell in with a royal band of expatriate litterateurs in Paris in 1951. It was still a man's world, and as Gay Talese would later write, everyone was looking for Hemingway. Matthiessen helped launch the influential *The Paris Review* and began work on his first novel, *Race Rock*. Two more novels followed, and then in the mid Sixties, settled among the literary potato fields of eastern Long Island, he started on the big outdoor canvas of *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*.

Its great conceit was the character of Lewis Moon, a half-breed Cheyenne mercenary pilot who parachutes into a tribe of Stone Age South American Indians. Against the drama of Moon's spiritual rebirth, and his crusade to stop the forces that destroyed the Cheyenne from destroying the tribes of the Amazon, Matthiessen posed a group of Protestant missionaries, also from North America, also determined to save the Indians. Though he shared with Melville a disdain for the cultural havoc wreaked in the name of God, Matthiessen vested the moral center of his story with the missionary Martin Quarrier, a humane but hapless man unable to communicate with his wife and tormented by impious lust for the wife of his colleague. Like Moon, Quarrier wants to understand himself and the people he means to save, but he is blinded by cultural preconception and religious conviction; that blindness costs him his son, his faith, and finally his life.

Matthiessen considered setting his story in New Guinea, but the missionaries of South America seemed stranger and more violent. He lived for months along the



Madre de Dios River in Peru. He heard the jaguars cough at night and traveled among the Campa Indians. He drew on the languages and the myths of tribes around the Amazon. He knew the trees from which they gathered sap to caulk their canoes. He knew "the dull cooked white" of the noonday sky, the forest with its "wild strangled greens," the "brown rivers of hot rain." The jungle awakened a cynicism, and he wrote in the excitement of having found his voice as a fiction writer.

The reviews confirmed as much. Random House took a full-page ad in *The Hollywood Reporter*, printing his picture and a testimonial from editor Bennett Cerf, who said *At Play* was "a once-in-a-great-while novel that makes a publisher proud of his job." It so did well, was selected by the Literary Guild and nominated for the National Book Award.

No novelist ventures into the jungle without a debt to Conrad, but twenty-five years later it's clear Matthiessen managed to push beyond the themes in *Heart of Darkness*. If *At Play* wants a more elegant overall design, it remains a movingly poetic, artfully crafted story, alert to the variousness of life and the blind spots inherent in a single point of view. And, perhaps more significant from the vantage of the contemporary film world, it anticipated the drastic disruption of life in the Amazon, a crisis the extent of which we are only now beginning to grasp.



THOUGH THE ANGLE ON THE BOOK ALTERED WITH shifts in the culture, the movie possibilities of *At Play* were not lost on Hollywood in 1965. With its vivid characters and literary cachet, it had prestige, and to the honey bees of Hollywood, no nectar is sweeter. In the early days the rag-trade ex-

who pioneered the film business looked to the bastions of high culture in New York to bolster their legitimacy. They imported giants like Faulkner and Fitzgerald and John O'Hara. And not always with the results they'd hoped for. O'Hara's dialogue was nice to the eye but murder on the mouth.

The premium on prestige in Hollywood today—now that L.A. has quit apologizing for not being New York—may have less to do with a regional inferiority complex than with a need to present a facade of high-mindedness to the public. People in the business do not like to appear interested only in making a bundle on schlock. Hence the veneration of art that might confer status and esteem, the pious heavy breathing about movies we in the industry can be proud of. A prestige property is a public statement of lofty aspirations, perhaps even a painless way of atoning for the speck of guilt lingering whenever you have enriched yourself at the expense of your other wise impeccable good taste. A prestige property is positively therapeutic. You don't even have to buy it. Just inquiring about the rights is enough.

Small wonder agents were buzzing about *At Play* even before it was published. New York-based producer Stuart Millar got the jump on everyone. Imposingly tall at six feet six and a half inches, Millar had learned the art of production working for William Wyler on *Friendly Persuasion* in 1955, when he was twenty-five. Eleven years later, Judy Felter, then married to cartoonist Jules Felter, told Millar about a book Peter Matthiessen was working on. She arranged an introduction, and Millar, who at the time had a deal with MGM director Arthur Penn to develop *Little Big Man*, persuaded the writer to let him read the manuscript.

"It left a powerful impression on me," Millar recalled. "I said to

Peter, 'I think this is going to be one of the great movies of all time.'" As relationships have always been the medium of commerce in Hollywood, Millar took Matthiessen's manuscript to MGM, where he had a relationship with story editor Russell Thatcher. MGM was then headquartered in New York, and despite the loss of a few sequins over the last decade, it was still the glamour house of Garbo and Gable, of *Grand Hotel*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Gone With the Wind*. Leo the Lion was the most recognized corporate logo in the world after Coca-Cola. Thatcher read the book overnight and passed it to vice president Maurice "Red" Silverstein and president Bob O'Brien. Though it posed just about every obstacle cost-conscious executives were sworn to avoid—a foreign location with airplanes, boats, animals, and kids—they were excited.

"The quality was so good, so interesting," said Silverstein, who had gotten his start in the business at sixteen working as an office boy for MGM progenitor Marcus Loew. "The whole character of the natives was unusual—they weren't Tarzan natives. I remember Russell and I talked about what kind of business it might do around the world."

The trio agreed the studio should make an offer for the rights to Matthiessen's literary agent, the late Diarmuid Russell of Russell & Volkening. In those days before taxes bounced from coast to coast, publishing circles still looked askance at him. But what Matthiessen's agent didn't know about Hollywood didn't hurt, because he sold the rights for \$250,000. "Amazing beyond belief," said Candida Donadio, who worked at the agency and now represents Matthiessen.

## AT PLAY IN THE FIELDS OF HOLLYWOOD

"When I sold the book, the lawyer for my agent said MGM was going down the tubes," Matthiessen said. "He persuaded me to take the money even though there was a good chance the movie would never be made. And sure enough."

Millar's new production was announced in February 1966. The \$5-million budget envisioned was big for the time. "They wanted to make it a most immediate y. The question was, Who would direct?" said Millar. He had offered the job to Arthur Penn, with whom he shared an office. Penn had recently completed *The Chase* and had asked Matthiessen if he wanted to write the script. The novelist said he didn't have the energy for it. Then Penn decided he wasn't the right director for the job either.

"Arthur agonized for about two weeks and finally turned it down," said Millar. "He was my first choice, and if he had said yes I think it would have gotten made. I was devastated." MGM's Thatcher urged Millar to get a script prepared. Millar hired Robert Dozier, whom he had known from their days making documentary films in the Army's Signal Corps photo unit. Dozier, then thirty-five, had worked with Millar on a movie called *The Young Stranger*.

"I saw it as a psychological story about reconciliation to oneself," recalled Dozier, who today is retired and lives in the California mountains, sixty miles from the nearest movie theater. "Moon was a kind of mispiced fellow who lived between two worlds and belonged to neither and was accepted by neither. I thought the adaption would be more of a carpentry job than anything else, a

# HOLLYWOOD AND VINES: A TALE OF TWO JUNGLES

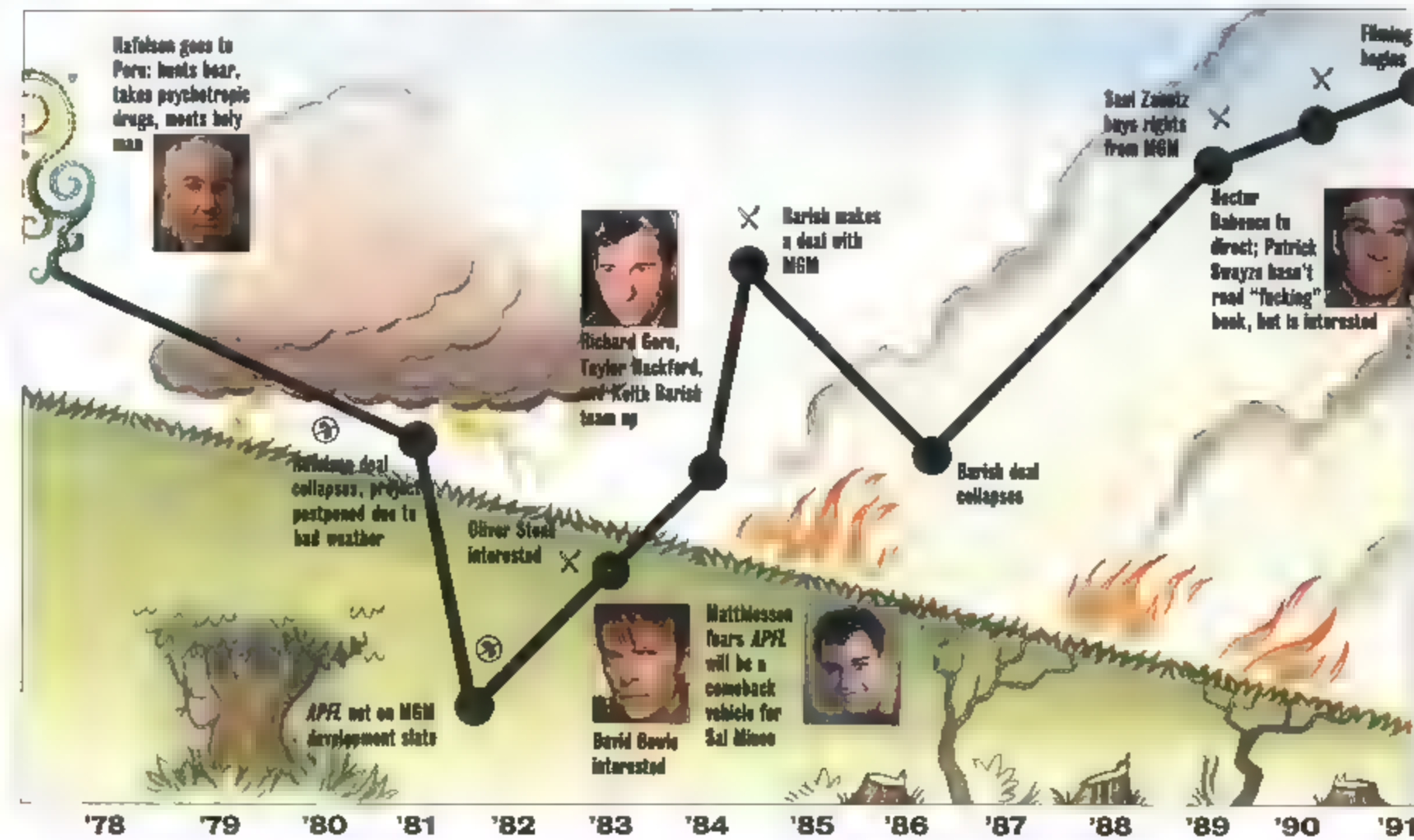
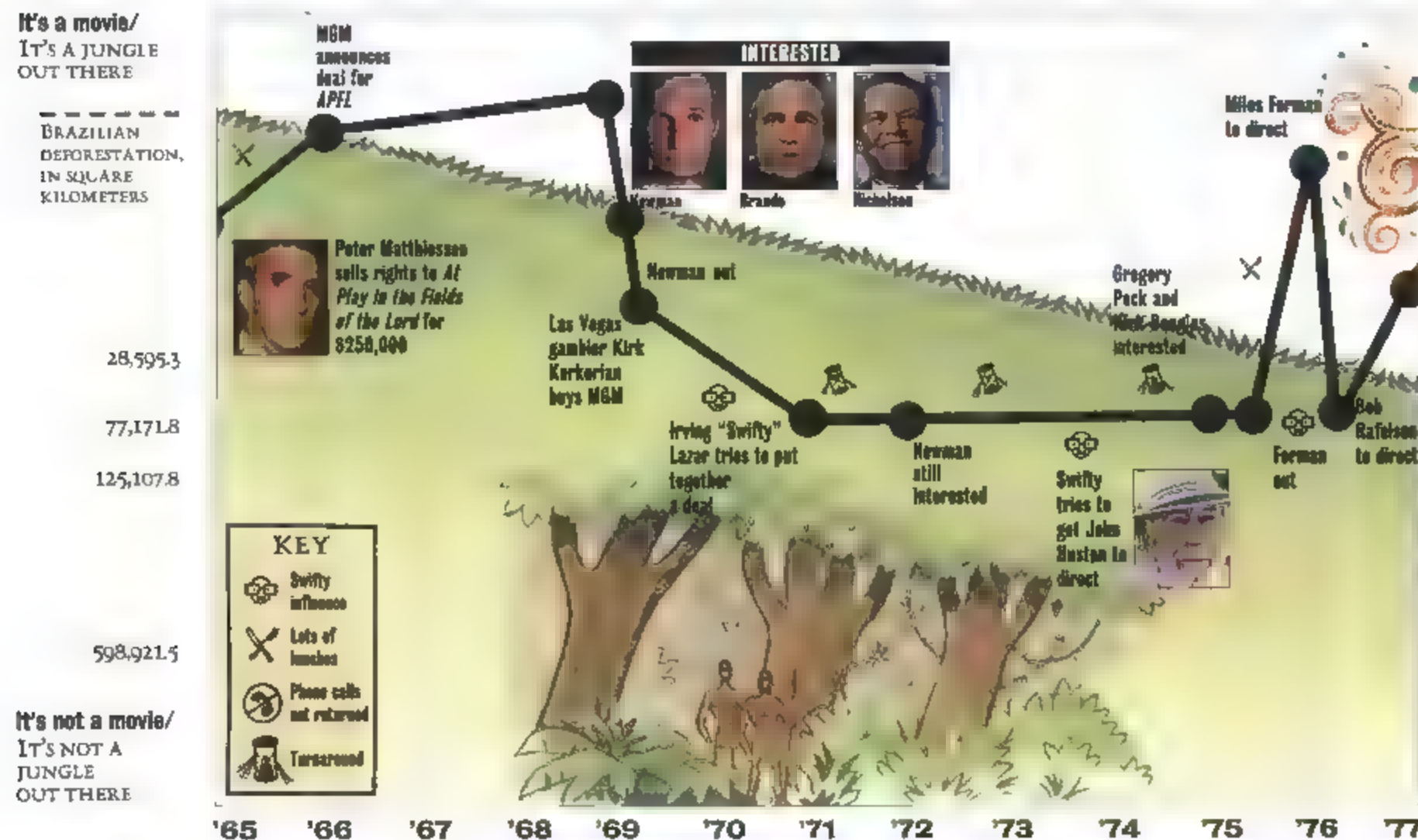


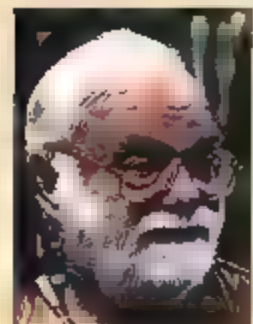
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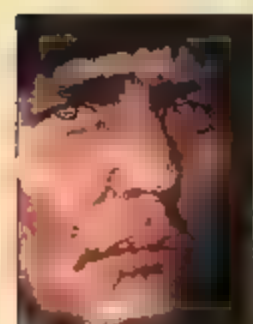
## A CURRENT PLAYERS ROSTER



Saul Zaentz, producer. Pursued Matthiessen's novel for twenty years.



Hector Babenco, director. Loathed the smoothness of Hollywood.



Tom Berenger as Moon, renegade Chayuma, "a liar, a hypocrite, a bad man."



Burt Reynolds (with co-star John Lithgow) as Andy Huben, missionary.

matter of editing, refining, and trying to give the book some dramatic flow."

He went to work in July 1966. He made several trips back east. Matthiessen urged him to incorporate the novel's psychedelic sequence in which Moon drinks the hallucinogenic ayahuasco and decides to jettison his old life for a new existence among the Myaruna. Dozier found the drug sequence—which is something of a trippy Sixties flashback for readers today—too hard to represent in the visual medium of film. Overall, his adaptation was scrupulously faithful. Mirar and MGM were pleased.

Now all they needed was a director. Millar embarked on a yearlong search. David Lean, who had helped save the studio with *Doctor Zhivago*, wasn't interested. What about Stuart Rosenberg, the director of *Cool Hand Luke*? Pass. What about British writer-director Bryan Forbes? MGM drew up papers. Millar had learned from MGM that Paul Newman wanted to play Moon. Forbes didn't want Newman, and the studio amazingly enough sacrificed Newman to woo Forbes. But when it became clear that Forbes wanted to rewrite the script, the deal fell apart. Thatcher was a staunch fan of the script. At the time of his death last year, he was probably one of the few Hollywood executives who had ever stood by a writer and passed on a star.

Millar then flew to Ireland to meet with John Huston, who wanted to rewrite the script, too. MGM tried to strike a deal, but negotiations fell apart over Huston's fee.

By 1969, after two years in the purgatory of development, Millar was no closer to getting the picture started. That year the studio was sold to Las Vegas gambler Kirk Kerkorian. To head up production, he brought in Jim Aubrey, the former president of CBS who'd built his reputation with TV shows such as *The Beverly Hillsbillies*. Above all else, Aubrey worried about stanching the red ink. Given this environment, MGM's Thatcher and Silverstein were concerned about the prospects for *At Play*. The sales of the book were good, but how commercial was the story really? It seemed impossible to keep the cost of the movie under the \$2 million ceiling Aubrey had imposed. And Silverstein, among others, had doubts about the aesthetic standards of the new regime. "Keep thinking *Beverly Hillsbillies*," he said.

What this presaged was turnaround, Hollywood's most common form of limbo. The deal broke apart when MGM proposed a director who Millar thought was the wrong man for the job. To the best of his memory, Millar got the letter in 1970 telling him the studio was no longer interested in making *At Play*. The rights were his to acquire within a year, if he could raise the \$500,000 the studio had invested in the project.

"I loved the book, but not enough to do it the wrong way," Millar said. "I was very upset. There was a year of frustration, of trying to get people to take over the interest from MGM. I walked away feeling I'd made an honorable attempt. It was too bad, but that's show biz."

THE PAST SWIMS FORWARD IN A SEA OF names. "Let's see," said Frank Davis, MGM's longtime head of business affairs, opening a pschicholored file. "Here's Stuart Millar in May 1967." Michael Ritchie, in May 1971, wants to supervise a script and budget. Eric Wiessman calls, Arthur I. Weidman calls. Patton director Frank Schaffner is attached. Producer Richard Lewis calls, English pro-

ducer John Heyman calls. Burt Reynolds is interested. *Dirty Dozen* director Robert Aldrich writes on Georgia State Prison letterhead. "When you look at the address, don't laugh," Terry Beck calls. Dick Carter, from Jack Lemmon's production company, calls. "We actually drew up a contract with Jack Lemmon," said Davis. Paul Rosen calls for *Zorba the Greek* director Michael Cacoyannis. Joe Strick calls. Someone calls representing a deluded scribbler with an uncommensured script. And here's Paul Newman, still chasing the property.

PAUL NEWMAN WAS THE TOP RANKED star in the country in the early Seventies; his production company had its pick of projects. Newman had read the novel at the urging of his partner and former agent, John Foreman, and, said Foreman, "liked it very much." So much they were going to burnish their legends with *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*.

"I considered *At Play* a seminal experience for me," Foreman recalled. "We should have made it. This convention covers various degrees of madness and hubris, and what *At Play* did was destroy that hubris. We never took the time to work it out. I regret it. I'm pissed. It's one of the parts Paul should have played."

After MGM's initial rebuff of Newman, Foreman and Newman continued to pursue the project, thinking the gravity of Newman's stardom would eventually draw *At Play* to them. They discussed it with Richard Brooks, the Academy Award-winning writer-director who had worked with Newman on *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in 1958. They talked it over with Stewart Stern, who'd written *Rebel Without a Cause* and who thought the book as a piece of film material was "the event of a lifetime." They sketched out casts. "We thought of Paul for Moon, and we had some conversations with Brando. He wanted to play the missionary—Quarrier," Foreman said. Patricia Neal, who had won an Oscar for *Hud*, was chalked in to play Quarrier's wife, Hazel. And Joanne Woodward was down for the other missionary wife, Andy Huben. "She was nearly young enough to squeeze into the part."

What Newman and Foreman had in confidence, they lacked in time. They had upwards of half a dozen movies in various stages of production. Principal photography was over-apping. And Newman was loath to veer from his routine of a picture in the spring, a picture in the fall, summers off.

"*At Play* was a gigantic, ambitious project," Foreman said. "It would have taken two to three years. It would be as if you were going to approach a film of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. You'd have to go down to South America. You'd have to have fifteen or twenty assistant directors who could speak the dialect of the natives. You couldn't put body makeup on actors and pretend they were Indians. Indians were a problem then—they wouldn't be now."

"We couldn't get everybody committed," recalled Stewart Stern. "I wanted everyone to commit to a movie and not just a script. I was pretty adamant that we should give each other that kind of support. The project just didn't coincide with people's plans. And going to the jungle never appealed to Paul—he liked to stay close to family."

Richard Brooks understood the collapse not as a matter of logistics but as another blow leveled against art by the Visigoths of commerce. "It was a big disappointment

to Paul and me," he said. "There was a great Indian story there, but I wanted to do it with real Indians, not some guy wearing a feather. The studio didn't want to go to South America and use real Indians. They thought you could film it in Palm Springs."

WOULD THIS MOVIE EVER GET MADE? SIX YEARS had passed and *At Play* seemed to be falling further and further into limbo. Irving "Swift" Lazar decided the situation called for an expediter of his magnitude. He'd tried to put a deal together in 1971. He took another crack on behalf of John Huston, who had reconsidered. "The second time, Huston would have taken whatever he could get, he changed his mind and wanted to do it," Lazar recalled. "Greg Peck was interested. Kirk Douglas was interested. People were always talking about that book as a runaway masterpiece. It had prestige. Kirk Kerkorian wasn't interested in making movies, but the studio wouldn't sell the property, because everybody was afraid to make a decision. That's typical of the way Hollywood works. If you see it and it becomes a hit, you're brought up before a firing squad."

In 1973 Daniel Melnick replaced Jim Aubrey as head of production at MGM. The studio was now making between four and seven movies a year, most on lean budgets of between \$3 million and \$5 million. "I never wanted to let the rights go, I wanted to make it," Melnick recalled. "All a studio has is a logo, its catalogue of films, and properties." Melnick talked to director Bob Rafelson, to Jack Nicholson, to Marlon Brando. "Periodically somebody would discover the book and say, 'Let's make a deal.' Everybody talked about it, and eventually it acquired what psychologists call the halo effect. It got to be considered almost a sacred thing."

IT OCCURRED TO BOB RAFELSON THAT HE MIGHT BE in big trouble. Nobody knew him from Adam in Leticia, an Amazon port town on the southern tip of Colombia just upstream from Brazil and across the river from Peru. Being the director of *Five Easy Pieces* didn't count for much. It didn't count for anything, as a matter of fact. Leticia had one generator and, come night, weird characters skulked about in the dark, striking matches in his face when they sensed his presence. And now here he was about to be arrested for taking pictures of a military base when in fact it was the cemetery next door he was interested in as a potential location.

"It just so happened that I had a shrunken head in my pocket, and I tried to say that I just wanted to bury it in the cemetery," he recalled. "I tried to improvise. I was put in a cell with a man who had been hung upside down, with wires on his testicles."

Just another day of preproduction on the new Bob Rafelson film, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*.

In Darwinian Hollywood one producer's defeat is another's opportunity. Rafelson had first discussed the project with Daniel Melnick in 1973. The portrait of Indian life always intrigued him, he'd studied anthropology at Dartmouth. When Melnick left, the director pitched *At Play* again to MGM's new production head, Richard Shepherd. "You're a sitting duck for passion," Shepherd recalled. "Bob came in and said all the right things. I said, 'Let's figure out how to get it done.'"

The deal, announced in January 1977, marked the start of a three-year campaign for Rafelson. Of all the people who wanted to film the novel, Rafelson as producer and director laid plans for a movie that strayed the furthest from Matthiessen's story. He wanted to focus on the imperial expansion taking place in the Amazon. He commissioned two scripts and made an epic research trip through the landscape of the novel, following an itinerary that bore an uncanny similarity to the imaginary journey of Lewis Moon. "That

# AT PLAY IN THE FIELDS OF HOLLYWOOD

was the idea," he said, during a break from work on his new film, *Man Trouble*.

Rafelson's first screenwriter was Walon Green, who had written *The Wild Bunch* for Sam Peckinpah and was a veteran of the Amazon, having made a documentary for National Geographic. Shepherd signed off on the writer. "I like orchids and Wally had made *The Secret Life of Plants*, I think it was, so I thought, 'This guy can't be all bad.' So I said go."

Thus blessed, Rafelson and Green set off in March 1977. Twelve years earlier Matthiessen could write of two thousand miles of unbroken jungle. Even as late as 1968, National Geographic insisted Green tack a pro progress epilogue on an Amazon documentary. But now the cocaine trade had filled Leticia with Range Rovers, the forest was tumbling, and aboriginal cultures were being wrenched into the twentieth century.

Rafelson had a pilot pretend to run out of gas and stage an emergency landing so he and Green could get a look at D.K. Ludwig's pulp mill near Belem. "It was like something out of the sixteenth century," he recalled. "Roads and clearings and hundreds of Indians sleeping on top of each other, all tubercular."

Green went off with two Peruvian soldiers to a village of pacified Myaruna on the Javari River, but when a pilot flew over the settlement there was no trace of the screenwriter, and reports were circulating that the Myaruna had killed two people. Rafelson thought Green was dead or a hostage. He started for the village in an eight-foot dugout laden with machetes and other offerings with which to ingratiate himself.

"I went with a river rat who would shoot game for his meals," Rafelson said. "When we got near, I buried the machetes and walked alone into the maloca singing at the top of my lungs. I sang *The Hills Are Alive with the Sound of Music*. An Indian jumped out with porcupine quills in his face. Wally was up there. At one point the Myaruna were very tame and sweet and elegant, but they had been turned into mercenaries. There were three villages. I stayed outside one for about three days. They let me observe, but I couldn't do anything. I took Polaroids. I went along on a wild-boar hunt where they shot poisoned arrows. I went out with a holy man and watched him pick plants. He made a weird clickety chant in the back of his throat. I dug up the machetes but they didn't want them. We had hammocks but I couldn't go to sleep because six Indians would be staring at me with arrows and porcupine quills."

The Indians had taken to wearing cast-off clothes. Green spotted one man wearing a bloody oil company shirt that looked to have been taken off a gunshot victim. At night mosquitoes slipped through the mesh of the screenwriter's netting, and he came down with a bad fever, the antibiotic he took killed the hair cells of his inner ear. His ears were ringing when he got back to California to work on the script. They ring still.

Green wanted to convey not just the themes of the novel—the barriers of understanding that exist between people, the hubris and arrogance of evangelism—but the sense of doom and impending ecological ruin. He introduced a timber operation akin to Ludwig's, a timber official named Holzgang, and a new plot line to give the script the conventional three-act structure of Hollywood movies, with a "ticking clock" for dramatic tension. The climax had Moon planting bombs on a giant river barge to foil Holzgang's loggers.

In December 1977 MGM announced the project was being postponed because of the weather. "There was a little two- or three-month window of time between the dry season, when the jungle dries out, and the rainy season, when everything was too wet," recalled Mike Haller, an MGM production designer. In fact Shepherd didn't like the screenplay enough to say yes without a major star attached.

"We needed an actor," Shepherd recalled. "Emotionally I liked the project, but I knew that without a Pacino or a Nicholson it had serious problems. It wasn't going to cause people to queue up in Wichita." Rafelson hired David Rayfiel, whom he'd brought to Hol-



lywood years earlier to do a rewrite. Six months later Rayfiel finished a 164-page script.

"I turned it in to Bob and never heard from him again," Rayfiel recalled. "I ran into him on an airplane, and we never even talked about it. A lot of people in this business hate to call with bad news." Rafelson asked for a postponement so he could take a job directing *Brubaker*. Faithful to his method, he had himself incarcerated in a Mississippi penitentiary to research the prison picture. *Brubaker* didn't work out—Rafelson was fired for striking a production executive, and the whole experience, he said afterward, "clarified for me that I was born not to make pictures for studios."

Once again *At Play* seemed to be inextricably bogged down. Studio president Frank Rosenfelt felt neither script captured the book. The marketing department was never high on the movie. "They thought, South American Indians, who cares?" said Green.

"My memory is that it just got put on the back burner," said Shepherd. "I probably said to Bob, it's just not ready to go, I can't get my board excited. We were probably dummies for not getting it made, but my memory is that we thought it was too expensive. There are just not a lot of films of that nature that have demonstrated they are commercial."

"Shepherd was a nice enough man, but he couldn't make a decision," said Rafelson. "I remember he said the script is 86 percent there. I said 86 percent is the highest grade I've gotten since college. I remember they wanted me to cast some silly people. I did talk to De Niro, and Shepherd said, 'You've got a go movie. I you get De Niro.' Bobby said, 'Yeah, but not now.' Newman said, 'Yeah, but not now.'"

When MGM filed proxy statements in May 1980, *At Play* had been dropped from the development slate. Over the years producers called Green wondering about his script. "Someone called once and said, 'It's great, we're gonna do it!' I think the director was Adrian Lyne. Then I heard they were hiring Oliver Stone to rewrite it. That's Hollywood—we love your script, can we get Oliver Stone to do a rewrite? They love you on Tuesday and someone else on Thursday. Hollywood is the prime example of Christian forgiveness. Nobody hates anybody for long."

Not even Rafelson.

"I always had some regrets I didn't make *At Play*," he said, "but I had an extremely enlightening trip. The movie would have been less than the experience." The project's collapse didn't really surprise him, either, one of the things he had done to deepen his understanding of Lewis Moon was to sample ayahuasca.

"I thought I needed to take it," he said. "I got it from a shaman. It came in an old whiskey bottle. It's not a pleasant experience—you see nothing but demons. For two days I had horrible nightmares. The idea is that a disease is inflicted by enemies, and ayahuasca helps you identify your enemy." He paused for a moment. "I identified MGM."

**I**F THE PROBLEM WASN'T WITH THE director, it was with the script, or the cast wasn't right, or the natives were restless, or the weather was too wet, or the budget was too big, or the studio's boss-of-the-month had his mind elsewhere. What would derail this juggernaut next, a secretarial error? By 1980 Shepherd was out at MGM, and David Begelman was in. Begelman thought *At Play* would cost too much. By

late 1982 Begelman was gone, and Freddie Fields was in. Fields wasn't around long enough to do much, despite the affinity he might have had with Matthiessen's book simply on the basis of his name. Matthiessen, for his part, grew increasingly fearful not that the movie wouldn't be made, but that it would. "My real terror was that it would serve as a comeback vehicle for Sal Mineo," he said. (Mineo had been fatally stabbed in 1976.)

And the names kept rolling in. David Bowie wanted to play Moon. Richard Gere wanted to play Moon. Richard Gere wanted to play Moon very badly and he wanted his friend Taylor Hackford to direct. And so seventeen years after the rights were first sold, the most acrimonious chapter in the history of *At Play* began.

"Everyone has a Hollywood horror story," said Taylor Hackford. "*At Play in the Fields of the Lord* is mine."

Hackford had read the novel while working in Bolivia for the Peace Corps in 1968. During the filming of *An Officer and a Gentleman*, he and Gere made a pact to do the movie if they could. Hackford saw *At Play* as "a great American novel" that explored two extreme forms of the North American mind, the missionary and the mercenary. "It focused on the nature of the American psyche. You see how amazingly isolated we are, caught up in our own world of make-believe," he said, in what could easily be read as a description of Hollywood itself. "I thought, This is crazy, why hasn't anybody made this?"

In February 1983 Hackford and producer Keith Barish agreed to join forces to develop a script. Hackford would direct; Gere would star. Vince Patrick, who'd written *The Pope of Greenwich Village*, would write the script.

"We focused on trying to make Moon's act on clear, and to bring up Quarrier, who's a great tragic character," Hackford said. For all of Hackford's enthusiasm, much of the book's nuances were lost in the script that emerged. It opened with a scene in which Naruna Indians rape some Catholic nuns; dialogue was helpfully provided. ("Ayuda!" say the abused sisters. "Aen! Aen!") Sent a copy, Matthiessen read no further than the rape on page 2 before he whipped the script across the room in disgust. He had written the rape into his novel, but well out of the main flow of events.

There were other changes. To Matthiessen, Moon was always a dangerous man, not to be revered. The missionaries claimed to have God's ear, but Moon claimed to be the deity itself. From the studio's point of view, the rich ambiguity of Moon's character was a box-office liability. Audiences want heroes to root for. Rather than gun down the Naruna warrior Acore at the end, Patrick spun the scene so that Moon spared his rival's life.

Barish's option was due to expire in the summer of 1983. Frank Yablans had replaced Freddie Fields as head of production at the studio, and when Barish's \$10,000 option-renewal check arrived a day late, MGM rejected it.

"We missed the deadline by one day," said Barish. "It was a secretarial error. Frank Yablans called me up and said, 'You missed the date, you better come in.' So I called Taylor. We meet in the MGM parking lot. We go in and have a meeting with Frank Yablans and probably Jay Kanter. We go through the pitch again. Yablans liked it. He calls me back, we go back and forth in the typical Hollywood way. Then he calls me and says I'm going to go pay or play. Pay or play means either you get to make the movie, or they pay you. Then the studio decides not to go with Taylor. I guess they had some problems with the script. At this point, they don't even call me."

At the suggestion of his vice-president, Peter Bart, Yablans decided to turn the project over to producer Saul Zaentz, yet another long-suffering aspirant in the sweepstakes. "I thought it would be a better picture," recalled Bart, who's now the editor in chief of *Variety*. "People at the studio felt it was marginally uncommercial."

Shoved aside, Barish could at least console himself with a \$500,000 fee, but Hackford and Gere were out in the cold. Hackford sued Barish for \$17.5 million.

"I've never been as angry in my life," said Hackford. "I sat there and said, 'Schmuck!' This is what happens when you do things idealistically. This was the film of our lives. I was going to do it for spit, and at that time because of *An Officer and a Gentleman* I could have asked for the moon. I didn't care. I put in three years of my life on *At Play*. I did this for free. For love. Richard and I were both committed. It was reverence for what Peter Matthiessen had created. I'll never get over it."

"Taylor thought I conspired to get the pay-or-play contract," Barish said. "It looked terrible. I tried to dig out from under the wheel. It was the worst thing I've been involved with. The odds of MGM making my deal pay or play, then me not making the movie, and then abandoning the director—it didn't make any sense. I blame myself—for a lack of communication, not for a sinister plot to get a pay or play. I believed in the material. I really believed."

He and Hackford settled out of court.

**W**ITH HIS WHITE SEA CAPTAIN'S BEARD AND his bizarre habit of actually reading books, Saul Zaentz is not cut from the cloth of the average Hollywood producer. He shifted into film after twenty years as the head of Fantasy Records, pointedly keeping his office in Berkeley and running his new venture under the motto of Sausalman's p. which is, The art of getting there without making their trip. The Oscars on his office shelf peer out at San Francisco Bay like a couple of displaced persons.

Now seventy, Zaentz stalked the rights to *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* with what can only be described as epic persistence. It was one of the two books he wanted to make into a film, and when he learned in 1969 that the rights were unavailable, he set his sights on producing the other. *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*. *Cuckoo's Nest* went into production, Zaentz made a cameo as the charter boat captain. Toward the end, in January 1975, director Milos Forman asked him what other books he had in mind. "I'll tell you when you've finished *Cuckoo's Nest*," Zaentz said.

On a plane to Australia to promote the film, he gave Forman Matthiessen's novel. A hundred pages in, Forman said in his thickly accented English, "This is not a silly book." En route from Australia to Japan, he said, "If you can get the rights, I'd love to do it."

In April *Cuckoo's Nest* became the first movie since *It Happened One Night* to sweep the major Academy Awards, and suddenly Zaentz found his phone calls were being returned with dispatch. The calls led to trips to L.A. for rounds of meeting-taking, the ritualized social intercourse of the film business, where people who are happier on the phone get together to exchange ideas and savor one another's unique personalities. Despite himself, Zaentz had developed some relationships, and so in the summer of 1976, before Hackford, before even Rafelson, Zaentz took a meeting with Frank Davis and Dan Melnick. He took some meetings with MGM president Frank Rosenfelt too. Lawyers and agents took some meetings. FORMAN MAY LEAVE "LORD" AS HIS NEXT PIC PROJECT, *Variety* reported in November 1976.

On the verge of success, the deal blew up.

Rosenfelt and Zaentz had proved to be tough negotiators. For his part Rosenfelt had the reputation of being the sort of hawk-eyed cost-

## AT PLAY IN THE FIELDS OF HOLLYWOOD

cutter who would personally review employee expense accounts. And Zaentz had established his credentials as a hard bargainer when he refused to renegotiate the terms

of his company's contract with Creedence Clearwater Revival, thus provoking a famous feud with the band's headman, John Fogerty, who titled one of his songs "Zanz Kant Zanz."

"The only thing I saw Zaentz delivering was Milos Forman," Rosenfelt recalled. "He'd just come off *Cuckoo's Nest* but he had no great track record as a producer—some failures, one success. As it turned out, I was proved wrong, because he came back and did *Amadeus*. One way we met our overhead was that every picture had to bear some of the cost of the studio's overhead. He objected very strenuously to that. He said, 'How about meeting my general overhead? It's done now with successful producers, but I didn't want to set a precedent.'"

Zaentz was convinced that no matter what the studio said, it would never make the movie, and that if he persisted, one day he would prevail in securing it for himself. And so for years, with every regime change, Saul Zaentz would troop over to the Thalberg building, sometimes with Milos Forman in tow, to alert the studio that they were still alive. He got to be a familiar face on the lot.

"Why don't you make it for us?" Peter Bart asked one time.

"I've got a cliché answer for that," said Zaentz. "I'm too old to work for somebody else."

In November 1985 Yablans left, and Zaentz, obeying what now seemed akin to the force that each year brings the swallows back to Capistrano, called on Jay Kanter, the new production chief at MGM. Kanter seemed to him a straight shooter. Nearly twenty years had passed since MGM first bought the rights to Matthiessen's novel.

"When I first arrived, *At Play* was in development with someone else. Ultimately a decision was made not to make it," said Kanter, employing that warily passive voice favored by studio executives who are on the record and have not yet been deposed. "I don't think we came very close to making it. The regimes were changing periodically, it just wasn't a picture we were going to go forward with. You can't live your life out of fear that someone else will make a bigger deal. Saul was quite persistent, and we did have a crack at distribution."

In September 1986 MGM sent Zaentz a six-month option agreement. It was a complicated deal and issues were still to be resolved. Zaentz agreed to reimburse MGM for all the money it had laid out to develop *At Play* since 1966, everything from Bob Dozier's fee and Stuart Millar's Ireland airfare to the half million for Keith Barish—\$1.39 million in all. In exchange the rights were his at last. He took out a full-page ad in *The Hollywood Reporter*: "Do we take meetings? After ten years of meetings, lunches, and phone calls to secure the rights, the Saul Zaentz Company is proud to announce an upcoming major motion picture *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*." Zaentz was answerable to no one but himself, not studio vice-presidents unhappy with the script, nor product heads worried about their slate, nor boards of directors fretting about interest payments on junk bonds. He had envisioned a \$15 million movie shot in the Amazon. But the nongob in that bedeviled Stuart Millar way back at what seemed to be the turn of the century now popped up in Berkeley. Director Milos Forman had developed high blood pressure during the long siege of MGM. He didn't fee up to an extended stay in the jungle. "Fifteen years ago I would have done it," he told Zaentz, and reluctantly bowed out.

**I**AM STRUGGLING TO BE A HAPPY MAN," SAID Hector Bahenco, unconsoled by the fine morning light on the breakfast patio of the Sunset Marquis, where a busboy was wandering among the outdoor heaters and metal umbrellas with a phone on a long cord. "Paging Mr. Simon, Mr. Simon, please," and



a clutch of models were buttering croissants after a few days hard work being beautiful in Mexico City, and Sinead O'Connor was mooning at someone who looked like Peter Dinklage.

For the first time in his career, the forty-five-year-old Argentine-born director of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Ironweed*, and *Pixote* was doing a movie for somebody else. With the final shooting still ahead and many weeks of editing looming after that, Babenco had an anxiety dream.

"I am driving an old American car, a Plee-moth," he said. "It will not move right, and I am trying to park it in a space, but I keep hitting the other cars around me. This Plee-moth belongs to another person. It is not my car, but I took the keys and I am driving it. I think the Plee-moth is *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*."

On the table was a hard-cover copy of Matthiessen's novel, the one Zaentz had found at a San Antonio library sale and sent him in October 1987. Parts of each chapter were underlined and annotated with Babenco's notes.

Babenco had met Saul Zaentz at the Cannes film festival in 1985. He had mixed some of *Kiss of the Spider Woman* at Zaentz's extensive production facility in Berkeley. Among other things, they shared an aversion to Hollywood. Babenco loathed the "smoothness of life" that was much in evidence on the patio of the Sunset Marquis.

"When Saul sent me the book I couldn't concentrate on it," recalled Babenco. "The English was difficult." A year passed and when Zaentz called again Babenco had finished the novel and had passed it to a couple of anthropologists who said the fictional treatment of the Indians was culturally exact. He and Zaentz met in Rio, and when the producer asked him to direct, Babenco said yes. He was given the chance to collaborate on the script with Jean-Claude Carrière, whom Zaentz had recruited in 1976, when Forman was going to direct. Zaentz, Babenco, and Carrière gathered at the producer's villa in Tuscany in April 1989. Carrière brought the notes he had made thirteen years earlier. They sat by a window looking at the olive trees, and while the producer's cook looked on quizzically, they read the book aloud like three oversized schoolboys, adrift on the music of the text.

That June, Babenco and Zaentz visited six Amazon Indian tribes and scouted locations. Momentum was gathering fast. They debated casting choices. "Richard Gere was blind to pay Moon," Babenco recalled. Patrick Swayze auditioned. The filmmakers were told he loved the book. When he showed up, he said, "Gee, I haven't had time to read your f---ing book, but I saw the coverage." The part of Moon eventually went to Tom Berenger. Tom Waits would play his sidekick, Wolf. John Lithgow, Darl Hannah, Adam Quinn, and Kathy Bates made up the town's quarter of missionaries. Matthiessen was hired to help tune the dialogue. "They don't have many Amazon experts in Hollywood," he said.

Given the new gospel of multiculturalism, it was no longer possible to see Matthiessen's story as strictly the drama of the North American characters, the story that had cried out to Taylor Hackford. In the script that emerged, the emphasis would be on the visited as well as the visitors. Babenco viewed the local Brazilian commandant, Guzman, generally treated in earlier scripts as a B-movie villain, as a man caught in a changing culture. The director's main work was to try to understand the Indians. "We are so used to considering them as characters," he said. "It took a while to consider they could have voices in their own community."

As for Moon, Babenco saw him as "a liar, a hypocrite, a bad man."

"Everybody gets aroused by the so-called spirituality of Moon. He's a bluffer, he is irresponsible," he said. "The movie is a register of a homicide at many different levels. The victims are the people of the forest, the forest itself. What shocked me was the fact that peo-

## AT PLAY IN THE FIELDS OF HOLLYWOOD

ple would have no respect for each other's culture. Especially Anglos, with their cult of privacy. It is the idea that I know what's going to save you—that I have


put you under my truth."

The principal photography began last June. On some days the temperature hit 108. Zaentz rented the Amazon cruise ship *Enaso* to house the cast and crew. The town of Mãe de Deus, with piers and boardwalks and a church, was built on a tributary near a Para rubber plantation outside Belém. The mission settlement was an hour and a half upriver on a narrow branch of the Guapá River. An Indian maloca was constructed in the jungle. Crews built an airstrip; the prop crews fashioned spears and nose feathers. The herpetologist hired to wrangle dangerous reptiles caught anacondas and spiders and a deadly coral snake lurking ten feet from Kathy Bates's trailer. Indians from five tribes were hired to play the Marana. Samuel Karaja, who plays the warrior Aeore, was found in a bus station in Brasília. Small wooden pirogues laden with supplies poked the wide brown river. One crew member had to be evacuated with Reiter's disease. By the time they shot the mission sequences everyone was depressed, and *Variety* carried cryptic bulletins that all was not well on the set. The cost of *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* was climbing, and by the time the shooting was over on the 155th day, the budget was estimated at \$30 million.

It takes an elaborate chain reaction to make a movie, in all those years that passed, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* never achieved the necessary critical mass. But in that time it served Hollywood ably as an excuse to deal. As Joan Didion once pointed out, that's what movies really are in Hollywood—excuses to make deals. And so Matthiessen's book was smothered in regard. It was loved nearly to death. At times it seemed sustained and propelled by nothing more than the talk that attended it. It was, in a way, the ultimate Hollywood production. It survived on its own buzz.

But perhaps the movie of *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* was a long time coming for a reason. Perhaps the culture had to catch up to the story. Catch up not simply to the topical issues of rain-forest preservation and aboriginal rights, which Matthiessen anticipated, but to the deepest questions in the novel, which now resonate through our days like the voice of a bellbird in the vanishing forest. Can God stand us anymore or the forces laying waste to creation? Can we reinvent our innocence alone, without the help of divine grace or the dubious absolution of happy endings on the big screen?

Before a deal is sealed, life hunts after art, it is not until all the documents have been combed and signed that art goes hunting after life. Late in the filming of *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, Hector Babenco and company spent a day shooting a scene in which Billy, the young missionary boy doomed to die of blackwater fever, chases a blue Morpho with a net. He was supposed to capture the butterfly and take it to his mother, Haze, who would crush it in her fingers just to prove that the beauty of a creature from the devil's garden was a perishable illusion and not to be esteemed.

Professor Darcu used the trick of the professional Morpho hunters who capture their quarry with quartered pineapples soaked in rum. With their weakness for fragrant sweets, the Morphos dropped down in droves and the professor had a jar of twenty. The shot called for Nuno Kivirinta, an eight-year-old Finnish actor, to pursue a rum-logged butterfly up a sunlit path from the mission to the forest. Of course nothing could be said that any butterfly would heed. Take after take the director cried, "Action," a Morpho tumbled free, and the child gave chase. 

Contributing Editor CHIP BROWN won the 1989 National Magazine Award in Feature Writing for "The Transformation of Johnny Spain" (January 1988). His last piece, "Blood Circle," appeared in the August 1989 issue. He lives in New York.



At last,  
perfection in a vodka  
Tanqueray Sterling



Evers (continued from page 63)

who is a devout Baptist, "but I found myself praying. I can do a lot of things with evidence, but I can't create it. The way things have come down, it's nothing short of a miracle."

The old court files and other documents were suddenly found in storage. In the spring of 1990, someone showed DeLaughter a copy of an obscure book called *Klan-destine*, written by a John Bircher and magician named William McIlhenny. It is the story of Delmar Dennis, a former Klansman turned FBI informant. In the book, Dennis claims that at a Klan rally he heard Byron De La Beckwith brag about killing Medgar Evers. According to Dennis, Beckwith told the secret gathering, "Killing that nigger gave me no more inner discomfort than our wives endure when they give birth to our children...."

About that time the long-lost Enfield rifle was found in, of all places, the closet of Bobby DeLaughter's late father-in-law, Judge Russel Moore, who apparently took it as a souvenir after the trials. The D.A.'s office kept these developments under wraps. By the spring of 1990, black leaders in Jackson were publicly asking why the prosecutors were dragging their feet.

Then a team from *Prime Time Live* arrived in Mississippi to do a segment on Beckwith and blew the case open. They found at least four new witnesses who said they could place Beckwith in Jackson on the night of the murder. Two appeared on camera. An elderly black man named Willie Osborne said he saw Beckwith at a church meeting only hours before Evers was shot. His account was backed up by ninety-year-old Rev. Robert L. T. Smith Sr., who said he also saw Beckwith in the crowd. Why, they were asked, did they keep their silence for so long? Osborne said nobody ever asked him about it. Smith said, "If I would have testified, they would have acquitted him before I finished talking."

If Beckwith actually does stand trial again, the prosecution will have to tear down those alibi witnesses his defense produced in 1964. The two white policemen are still alive. They have said they are willing to testify that they saw Beckwith outside a Greenwood filling station about a half hour after the shooting. One of them, James Holly, is now a Greenwood city councilman.

There's more: Most people think that whoever killed Medgar Evers did not act alone. Beckwith's telephone records were subpoenaed in 1964, but most were never revealed. Who knows what names might show up on that list if he comes to trial again?

Some black leaders in Jackson have called for a Nuremberg-type tribunal to look into all the unpunished crimes of the past. Medgar Evers's spirit is only one of the roiling specters of the civil-rights struggle. So, ironically, are the ghost-sheeted remnants of a tattered Ku Klux Klan.

THE MISSISSIPPI KU KLUX KLAN HAS been in a slump for years. But in Byron De La Beckwith, it smells the fresh blood of a martyr, and martyrs are good for business. That's why, in early February, the Confederate Knights of the KKK descended on Tylertown, Mississippi, to honor Beckwith.

A warm front blew in that morning, chasing the ice clouds out of the sky. Tylertown, population 2,100, is a community of dairy farmers in southern Mississippi's "cream pitcher," just inside the Louisiana line. Along Tyler Avenue, American flags and yellow ribbons flapped in the mild breeze. A few Saturday shoppers browsed along the covered sidewalk. Pickup drivers pulling into the Sonic Drive-In on Beulah Avenue for an eighty-nine-cent corn dog and a bucket of iced tea might not have even noticed the Confederate banners gathering over by city hall.

There were fewer than twenty uniformed marchers. All wore Confederate-gray robes. Joe McNamee, a sort of storm-trooper flack, was trying to clear up what he thought were a few misconceptions about the Klan. "Every time you see something in the news they show a nigger hanging up," he said. "I've been in the Klan all my life, and I've never seen a nigger hung yet! Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

McNamee explained that the Klan hoped to raise money for Beckwith's defense and maybe scare up some new members. They support Beckwith, he said, because he's "not a killer. He's a hero. He thinks the same way we do."

At 2:00 P.M. the marchers suddenly lofted their Confederate battle flags and marched single file onto Beulah Avenue.

"What's the solution?" shouted a robed Knight with a bullhorn.

"WHITE REVOLUTION!" shouted the Klan.

A cordon of town, county, and state police surrounded the marchers. At first only a few startled passersby stopped to stare. Then an older black man in work clothes stepped out of a shop and froze in his tracks.

"NIGGERNIGGERNIGGER!" shrieked the man with the bullhorn. "OUTOUTOUT!"

People heard the commotion and started lining the street. The parade stopped at the courthouse on Tyler Avenue and a paunchy Klan preacher grabbed the bullhorn and announced that he wanted to tell everybody about Byron De La Beckwith. Black teenagers had swarmed in from the side streets, and now about four hundred people, black and white, mobbed around the hooded marchers.

Then an astonishing thing happened.

The crowd began to laugh.

"Whoo-whoo-whoo!" a black girl in a tank top hooted, churning her fist in an Arsenio Hall salute, then twisting her butt at the Klansmen while her girlfriends squealed with laughter.

"Buncha faggots!" shouted a boy in a tracksuit.

"I'm black and I'm proud!"

"Yeah, white niggers! You ain't civilized!"

It went on like this for an hour. The only speaker whose voice cut through the noise was a middle-aged thumper with a beer gut and Elvis sideburns, who paced in front of the crowd like a transported snake handler.

"We are the gray ghosts of the Confederacy," he bellowed. "You can hear the hoofbeats of the horses, but you cannot see the riders!"

One of those gray ghosts was unable to appreciate this rally in his honor. Beckwith was in Chattanooga, trying to cash in on his newly revived celebrity. He's still behind bars, feverishly writing letters to lawyers, old friends, supporters, and journalists. Earlier this year, one of his pen pals was me.

I responded to the postcard he sent me with another letter, a list of basic questions, and—as he required—a snapshot revealing my blond, Aryan self. His reply arrived a few weeks later on letterhead inscribed with his personal motto: On the White Right Christian Side of Every Issue.

He got to the point: He wanted \$5,000, "payable in advance" to his lawyer, for the interview. He seemed familiar with *Esquire*: "I don't care if your money comes from the bowells of serpents," he wrote, "or is handed to you from the hands of beasts.... Let's do it my way or no way."

NO WAY, AS IT TURNED OUT. BUT in his cards and letters there were more samples of his sense of humor: "I'm a 'liberal,' you might say, about guns," he wrote in one letter. "Guns for pleasure, protection and profit...I love any race colour or creed who loves a gun—I'll even trade guns with Jews." And a few of his beliefs: "There really aren't many White Right Christians left on earth—but it don't take many to run the earth—and anything less than that gets my race, colour and creed innards out of sorts."

In my letter I asked De La Beckwith who killed Medgar Evers and why. He referred me to his forever-soon-to-be-published memoirs, *Glory in Conflict*.

"Who smote Medgar?" he wrote. "It's right there in the book, along with a cotton sock full of probable whys...."

I asked him if he had changed since Mississippi's "defiant years." He couldn't resist.

"Now, Miss Maryanne—there is an old saw about the older the ram the stiffer the horn—and you shock me with the word *defiant*—what does that mean? *Defiant* seems the word to describe Goliath—remember what happened to that *monzer* (a Jewish word for mongrel)—a young white gentleman of the nobility smote him...."

"I'm a blue-blooded Israelite with papers to prove it.... We of true Israel were put here to defy the defiant—Luke 19:27 gives you the picture."

I looked up the verse from Luke and got the picture: "But those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." ☐

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On page 74: Bigdude sport jacket (\$715), shirt (\$145), and trousers (\$265) at Men's Quarters, Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania; Raffles, Encino, California; Bella Moda, Los Angeles; Ariston, San Francisco; Alex Forma, Portland, Oregon. For information contact: Bigdude, 801 Madison Avenue, Third Floor, New York, New York 10021.

On page 75: Nino Cerruti sport jacket (\$225) at Macy's, New York and New Jersey; G. Fox, Hartford; Hecht's, Baltimore; Famous Barr, St. Louis; Meier & Frank, Portland, Oregon. For information contact: Hartmarx, 1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10104. Valentino Uomo turtle-neck (\$255) at Saks Fifth Avenue and Bloomingdale's, nationwide. For information contact: Valentino Uomo, 650 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10019.

On page 76: Fratelli Rossetti shoes (\$400) at Fratelli Rossetti, New York; Silhouette, Washington, D.C.; Strega, Philadelphia. For information contact: Fratelli Rossetti, 601 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

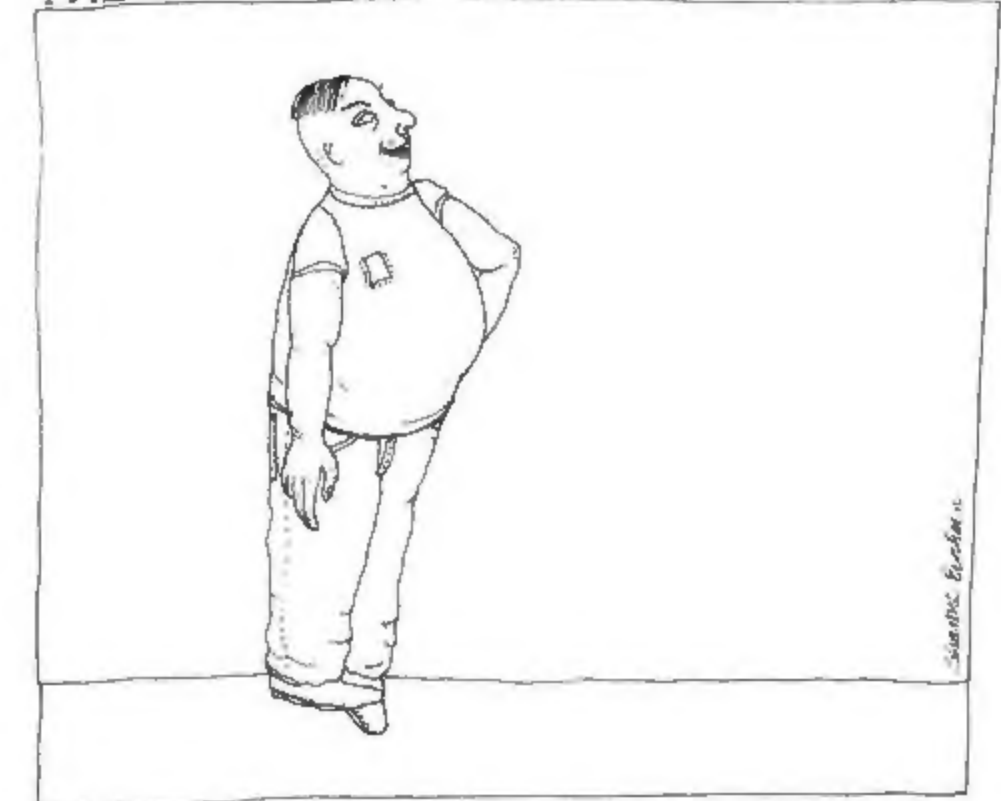
On page 77: Polo/Ralph Lauren Footwear shoes (\$350) at Polo/Ralph Lauren stores, New York, San Francisco, Boca Raton, Houston, Beverly Hills. For information contact: Polo/Ralph Lauren, 867 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10021. Cole-Haan shoes (\$470) at finer

department and specialty stores nationwide. For information contact: Cole-Haan Footwear, 44 North Elm Street, Yarmouth, Maine 04096. Bally of Switzerland shoes (\$235) at Bally of Switzerland stores nationwide; Clappers, New York; Belk Brothers throughout the southeast. For information contact: Bally of Switzerland, 1 Bally Place, New Rochelle, New York 10801. Brass Boot shoes (\$95) at Robinson's, California. For information contact: Brass Boot Shoe Co., P.O. Box 2047, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201. A. Testoni shoes (\$495) at A. Testoni Boutique, Beverly Hills and Honolulu; Trillion, Palm Beach, Florida; Lazoff, Puerto Rico; Wilkes Bashford, San Francisco; Neiman Marcus, Beverly Hills. For information contact: A. Testoni, 745 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1205, New York, New York 10151.

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## THE TROUBLE WITH MEN



STAYING THE SAME SIZE YEAR AFTER YEAR WITH THE OLD "WEARING THE PANTS LOWER AND LOWER" TRICK.



### Sleeping Around (continued from page 69)

Now, this, remember, was at a time when AIDS had already burned its way into the imagination.

"I think it's a woman," Guy muttered, looking at the helmet of too-shiny hair.

Suddenly we were close to the front and were looking right into the face of whoever it was on his or her knees. It was a handsome-enough face, but with a pale, corroded look, and big dark eyes that looked hungry and not wholly sane. It was too brief a glimpse, though, to determine the sex. We left.

So to the Mineshaft. This (I had been told) was the most serious of the clubs, hardest of the hardcore. We passed a sign warning that patrons would have to check "objectionable" clothing, and one of Guy's friends was requested to remove his sweater, which wasn't a dress-up sweater but a keep-warm sweater. He did so as a man beside him, a sixty-year-old financier by his sober air, stripped down to his underwear.

We ordered more beers at the street-level bar and made for the stairs—the Mineshaft was just that, a shaft—and on the next level I realized that this was going to be rather different from what I had expected. That was less because of what was going on (ordinary sucking, mutual or solitary masturbation, et cetera) than because of the silence in which everything was conducted, a silence not denied but intensified by the background music—Ravel, I was told—and even more because of the lighting.

This was dim, but it was a dimness of an artfully calculated sort. For instance, many of the men, and there were only men, were dressed up in the macho attire once sported by the Village People—cowboy hats, cop's uniforms, construction helmets—and many were entirely naked, and others were at all stations in between, but the shadowless gray penumbra wholly leached our detail. In the distance they seemed insubstantial, and as they drew closer, you could tell that they were old, young, fat, thin, bearded, hairless, or whatever, but the quirks and quiddities that make up character were rubbed out by the obscure glimmer, so that they looked at once spectral and solid, like figures molded out of wet chalk.

The men who approached us were polite. If they found no answering flicker, they would simply move on. One offered me his penis, as passionately as a waiter proffering the check. I didn't even have to shake my head before he moved on. In one corner we heard slaps and approached to investigate. A chained man was being whipped, until the whipper suddenly abandoned his task and strode petulantly off, leaving the whipee bereft. Another tableau that heaved into vision presented us with a cluster fuck on the floor, a heaving mass of buttocks, backs, and members, like a rather cluttered piece of late-Victorian statuary.

Some of the tableaux were quite striking.

There was a barred jail, filled with "prisoners" standing motionlessly and staring in the same direction. A naked man in an alcove was being rectally penetrated by another, while a queue waited to take over, presumably part of that small thrill-seeking element for whom the risk of catching AIDS is the ultimate frisson.

A few weeks later all the above clubs were closed by the city as an anti-AIDS measure. Plato's Retreat was closed, too.

Very commonsensical, except that common sense doesn't have much to do with things when compulsion is involved. Very soon the scene had regathered. Fixed-location clubs have, I understand, been replaced by transient meeting places, but otherwise things go on pretty much as ever.

I HAD MET MIA AT INNUMERABLE parties. She came to my apartment to tea a while ago. With her she brought a friend, a tall, slender girl with long hair and fine, rather imperious features. She was perhaps twenty-six, and I found I had met her once before, at a very formal dinner. Call her Elise.

Elise was studying fabric design. It happened that I had a sofa that needed recovering. A few days later, she brought around swatches of her materials, but none was quite the thing I had in mind.

We talked. Elise had modeled in Paris with one of the better agencies and had been through the art course at Sotheby's in London. As we talked, she unembarrassedly smoothed the stocking on the inside of her thigh. It struck me as a bit odd, being so casual, almost provocative, and a bit at odds with her conversation, which was polished, high-flown, almost priggish. I felt a stirring.

We decided to go to a movie. There was a long line outside our first choice, so we went to another, in which the main character was a young, gorgeous prostitute. Afterward, we dined at a small Italian restaurant and talked of the film, as one does. The actress in the movie (I said) had seemed rather too bright, nice, and pretty for a whore. I added that I thought that men who made a practice of using prostitutes were mildly abnormal. She disagreed forcibly on both counts.

Ah, I thought, a liberal young woman. Well, good. We began to talk about the Mayflower Madam, Sydney Biddle Barrows, who had been much in the news. Elise censured Sydney for "dropping her girls in the shit." A question formed in my mind. No, it was absurd.

The conversation switched to Mia. Elise said, crossly, that she was booting Mia out of the apartment. She could never come up with the rent. Actually, Mia's finances had always baffled me. "How does Mia earn a living?" I asked.

Elise looked at me as if I were thick as a plank.

"You mean..."

She nodded. Pretty soon it all came out,

and quite without shame. Elise worked for herself, charged three hundred dollars a go, and was on the job about five nights a week. She talked without compassion of the fifty-dollar girls and the junkies in their early teens on Fourteenth Street who give blow-jobs for ten dollars, not because the risks have scared customers away but because the girls are unbusinesslike. Elise is a businesswoman and, yes, she does aim to turn her fabric designs into something big.

What about AIDS? I asked finally. Forget the morality—what about life and death?

"I take precautions," Elise told me.

My sofa still needs recovering.

RETROSPECTIVE MORALIZING IS EASY and a lot of fun, and it has been indulged in by thinkers from St. Augustine on, but it's not my intention here. I am a charter member of a lucky lot, the four-P generation, which is to say post-Pill, pre-plague. I enjoyed it thoroughly, learned a great deal, and regret fairly little (probably less than I should).

It has to be faced, though, that many believe that it was those same sexual liberties—in the beginning most aggressively and publicly advanced by heterosexual males—that have landed us in this lethal stewpot. Worse, that the sexual revolution is devouring not only its own children but noncombatants too. The jury is still out on why the Virus came, but the notion of disease as retribution is a creepy one. As somebody wisely asked: Who was the black death sent to punish?

As we settle into the century's last decade, straight mores have changed, but not nearly as drastically as the panic of the mid-'80s would suggest. Some of us are still careless and apparently free with ourselves. Others practically insist on wearing rubber gloves for holding hands. A woman I know left a dinner party rather than sit next to a gay man, even though he was clearly fit enough to wrestle steer at a county fair.

Mostly, though, I see prudence, with flickers of unease. Like many, I used to enjoy recklessness in these matters for its own sake. That's gone. But there are some curious pluses. One is the remarkable new honesty of discourse. I now find myself discussing things with a brand-new dinner partner that I once would have flushed at discussing with my doctor. There is another by-product—at least in my necessarily limited personal experience—and that is the revival of a long-lost craft: heavy petting. I find myself remembering the au pair girls, the debutante dances. It is like swimming backward through time. Soon, I expect, I shall have a renewed interest in *Gray's Anatomy* and the lingerie advertisements in fashion magazines. How strange and sad to be a member of the first generation in the history of the human race never to wish that my mistakes were still unmade, my adventures lay ahead, and that I was twenty-one again. ☐

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# The Esquire Business Traveler

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### If You Have to Deduct It, You Can't Afford It

Representative Andrew Jacobs (D-Indiana) has reintroduced a bill that would limit business tax deductions to "normal tourist-class fare." Business- and first-class passengers would pay the difference out of their own pockets.

### The Last Honest Man

Bucking what will probably be a nationwide trend, San Francisco airport says it will not impose a new "passenger facility charge" (i.e., head tax) on boarding and deplaning passengers. Permission to levy the fees (up to \$12 per round trip) was granted as part of a noise-control law passed last year. Director of Airports Louis Turpen says the tax won't solve any real problems.

## Eat and Run What's Cool in New York This Summer

BY JOHN MARIANI

**F**OR THOSE OF YOU who couldn't snare a reservation for love or money at Metro, 150 Wooster, Huberts, Sofi, or Canal Bar when they opened, yours is the last laugh. Despite being among the hottest tickets in town as recently as a year ago, all have gone belly-up for lack of business. And for those of you who feared being intimidated at power dining rooms like Le Bernardin, La Côte Basque, the Four Seasons, and '21, you'll now find the greeting considerably more amiable and tables easier to come by than in the days when regular customers phoned in "negative reservations" if they were *not* coming that day.

Still, no matter how lousy business is, it hasn't stopped people from opening new places week in and week out, all hoping to become the restaurant of the moment, a place where limos double-park outside the door, and where you find that yours is the only name in the reservation book without VIP marked next to it.

It's no surprise, then, to find new restaurants that are jammed every night. There's a whole slew of them at the moment, some good, some bad—Big City Diner, Le Comptoir, Savoy, TriBeCa Grill, Jour et Nuit, and Lucky Strike, to name but a few—but here are those that I'd happily recommend to those who want to eat well and see why New York always burns at full wattage. But go quickly. They might turn off the lights tomorrow.

**Les Halles** (411 Park Avenue South; 212-679-4111). The affable owners of the wonderful Park Bistro across the street have made this butcher-shop-and-bistro the perfect antidote for those who can't stomach the tenets of spa cuisine. The steak frites is textbook perfect, the cassoulet sturdy, and the fruit tarts nonpareil. The crowd does its best to imitate people you'd find in a Brassai photo. Dress code: Paul Simon.

**Coco Pazzo** (23 East Seventy-fourth Street; 794-0205). If anyone has the golden touch these days, it's Pino Luongo, whose Le Madri hit fashion pay dirt two years ago and who now draws the arts-and-benefits crowd to Coco Pazzo, where platters of Italian food—enough to feed an Upper East Side family for a weekend—are served in a spirit of headlong frenzy, all at moderate prices unimaginable when this place was the deluxe Metro last year. Dress code: Anglo-Saks Fifth Avenue.



**Vince & Eddie's** (70 West Sixty-eighth Street; 721-0068). An unpretentious spot near Lincoln Center serving toothsome dishes like lamb shanks with a wine-and-cherry sauce, beef stew with English stout, and plum tart with hazelnut ice cream, all in an atmosphere even Martha Stewart could love. Dress code: older sweaters.

**Café** (210 Spring Street; 274-0505). This bustling SoHo bistro is run by Richard Widmaier-Picasso (yes, *that* Picasso), who has managed to give the place the feel of a true Parisian sidewalk bistro, where people come for dishes like lamb sausage and white beans, grilled tuna Provençale, and excellent crème brûlée. Dress code: last year's Madonna.

**Harry Cipriani** (781 Fifth Avenue; 753-5566). The return of the Cipriani family (of Harry's Bar in Venice) to the Sherry-Netherland Hotel after a three-year absence was greeted by the moneyed international set with almost giddy relief. The decor is bright and cheerful, the Venetian food exquisitely simple—though priced for the kind of crowd that never checks a bill. Dress code: any designer whose name ends in a vowel.

**Chefs and Cuisiniers Club** (36 East Twenty-second Street; 228-4399). What a neat idea! Pool the resources of some of the city's best young chefs (including Charlie Palmer of Aureole and Rick Moonen of the Water Club) and announce that "CCC" will be a place for their colleagues to relax and schmooze with the public in a bright little café serving lusty fare like tripe, osso buco, and apple tarts, all at reasonable à la carte prices. Dress code: end of the bed. ☛

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